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MEXICO

ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY

M. MICHEL CHEVALIER

SENATOR, AND MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE, OF FRANCE

TRANSLATED UNDER THE AUTHOR'S SUPERINTENDENCE

BY

THOMAS ALPASS

FOR MANY YEARS FOREIGN EDITOR OF "THE MORNING CHRONICLE"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONDON

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INTRODUCTION.

EVENTS have spoken for themselves since this volume was published in French. The author believes he does not exaggerate in saying that in most points they have shown him to be in the right.

The French arms have justified the superiority he attributed to them. The city of Puebla, which the Government of Juarez made their bulwark and centre of resistance, was taken after a siege that did honour to its defenders, for it was necessary, as at Saragossa, to carry the place house by house; but it did greater honour to the besiegers. Thanks to the ability and firmness with which the operations of the siege were conducted, the fall of that city may be said to have terminated the campaign, by opening to the French the gates of Mexico. After that glorious

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feat of arms, the Mexican troops nowhere showed a front; and at the present moment Guanaxuato, Valladolid, Guadalaxara, San Luis de Potosi, Acapulco, and the whole of Yucatan, are occupied by French detachments. The party represented by Juarez is master solely in a few inaccessible retreats among the mountains. The populations, contented that the honour of their country has been saved, and full of hope in a new *régime*, everywhere receive the French as friends, and as their future mainstay.

The facts now accomplishing attest also the re-awakening of that monarchical sentiment which the author had noted as still vivacious in the hearts of Mexicans, and as that which would rally round it the great majority of the Liberal or Republican party, provided Monarchy presented itself under the escort of a group of public liberties suited to the intellectual and moral state of the country. Every day brings the adhesion to the new *régime* of some of those chiefs who fought under the orders of the Juarez Government.

The Archduke Maximilian accepts the burden of the crown of Mexico with a noble courage. The resolution is a grand one, but not unlooked

for by those who observed him in Italy. He is sensible that he will have to repeat more than once the words of a former Emperor of Mexico, "that he is not on a bed of roses." Everything seems to indicate that the Mexicans are going to welcome and treat him, not as an ambitious individual, led away by an immoderate passion for sitting on a throne, but as a high-souled man, who devotes himself to their cause, and has undertaken the lofty task of saving a nation subject of old to the authority of his family.

The Archduke will arrive in Mexico, not with a staff of Germans, military and administrative, but (as the author anticipated) alone, with his portfolio under his arm. He will have two armies to guard his throne—one composed of Mexican troops, the other formed and disciplined by France, and commanded by French officers, with a large number of French soldiery in its ranks. It cannot be denied that the latter will at first be the chief protection of the new throne; but why should not the Mexican army, when better directed, return to those traditions of fidelity to the Sovereign for which Mexico was formerly conspicuous among all the other Spanish colo-

nies? The rivalry of the generals was what led the Mexican army astray. It will come back to sentiments of duty when it sees authority permanently concentrated in the hands of a firm and enlightened Prince, around whom has rallied every individual of importance.

On one important point, the author gave utterance to hopes in regard to which there is now reason to entertain and express doubts. It seemed to him that, on the Mexican question, the interest of the North of the American Union was mixed up with the object proposed to herself by France, when sending her sons to combat at Vera Cruz and Puebla. He believed the Americans of the North would rejoice at the establishment of a stable Government in Mexico, that would convert that country into a respected state. "Of what import," he wrote, "is it to the North to extend the boundaries of the Republic? The territory she possesses is so vast, that she cannot but be contented, however ambitious she may be. What concerns her is, that a limit should be prescribed to slavery, and that this sentence should be intimated to the *peculiar institution*: 'Thou shalt go no further.' The expedition to Mexico cannot therefore be

annoying to the North; it responds to her notions, it agrees with her policy." But there is now reason to fear that, once victorious in her struggle with the South—as events appear to promise she will be—the North may look at the affair in quite a different light. It is not impossible but that, in the vast Republic of America, ambition and the spirit of domination, excited by the mischief-working influence of bidders for popularity, may stifle the voice of reason and justice. There will be no lack of tribunes to urge that powerful democracy to seize on the territory left to their unfortunate neighbours, whom they have already despoiled of half the space they occupied. The author's opinion may therefore have been an illusion; but he excuses himself by the recollection that, if he was mistaken, it was from having imagined the success of what was reasonable and just.

On another point the author bitterly regrets having been too entirely right. He was convinced of the obstacles that might be raised against the establishment of the new *régime* by the pretensions of the higher Mexican clergy, supported by the ignorance and superstition of the population. Those difficulties have already

presented themselves. France could not go to Mexico to found there a new order of things except with the condition of their being in conformity with the spirit of the time. The honour of France, the secret of her influence in the world, is that she represents those immortal ideas known as the principles of 1789, which are the terror of oppressors and the hope of nations oppressed, or conducted by incompetent leaders astray from the paths of civilization. France must therefore foster in Mexico those liberal and progressive ideas which she has introduced into her own policy with so much success. With regard to Religion, her task was to cause it to be respected; but it was also incumbent on her to aim at making the relations of the Church with the State in Mexico what they are at home; to insist that liberty of worship should be recognised; that the clergy should not form a State within the State; that the publication of documents emanating from the Court of Rome should be subjected to the previous approval of the government; that the clergy should cease to be proprietors of the best portion of the territory; and consequently that the laws formerly passed for the sale of the clergy lands should

remain in force, on the condition of a suitable provision being ensured to ecclesiastics. It is true that, in that way, the influence of France would be exercised in a mode that would respond to the most ardent sympathies of the Liberal and Republican party just ejected from power; but where reason and the interest of the State were comprised in the programme of that party, nothing can be said against it.

Scarcely had the French entered Mexico than obstacles sprang up under their feet. A resistance was organized against certain measures taken by the French authorities, or determined on by their influence. There placed himself at the head of this reactionary faction, it is painful to say, a prelate who, at Paris, had been loaded with attentions from the Emperor and Empress—who, by favour of the support of France, had been chosen for one of the three members of the Regency appointed to govern the country provisionally. That prelate was the Archbishop of Mexico.

This sort of insurrection against French intervention was exhibited *apropos* of two incidents—the protest of certain members of the clergy, who desired that sales of church property should be declared null and void—sales effected under the

preceding *régime* in virtue of laws regularly passed; and the opening of a chapel at Mexico, in which such of the French soldiers as were Protestants might practise their worship.

It must be remarked that, by way of conciliation, the French authorities had consented that the sales of the clergy lands should be valid only after revision. It may be thought that, in doing so, the spirit of concession was pushed too far; not but that abuses were committed in these sales, but that, in fact, revision is a remedy worse than the disease. So much condescension however did not disarm the reactionary party; it is even possible that it encouraged them.

Be this as it may, the Archbishop of Mexico, forgetting not only what he personally owed to France, but also the services that French intervention was rendering to Mexico and to Catholicism, was eager to create a sensation. He resigned his functions as a member of the Provisional Government; he issued a protest; and a little later he distributed papers among the faithful, in which, according to the terms of a letter addressed to this high Church dignitary by General Neigre, commanding at Mexico, "appeal was made to the most detestable passions against the

army of his Majesty the Emperor." The circumstances of the case were such that the General thought it his duty to address the prelate in these words of severity towards the clerical party, and towards himself, for having been weak enough to take part in their manœuvres:—

"Tell that party, Monseigneur, that we are "watching them, and are aware of their plots, and "that in union with the legitimate Government of "the country, the armies of France will maintain "tranquillity. Tell them, that though it is always "repugnant to us to employ violent measures of "repression, we shall yet, should circumstances "make the painful duty incumbent, know how to "thrust back these real enemies of Mexico into "the obscurity from which they dare to issue "their diatribes."

This is the beginning of an embarrassment, the seriousness of which it is impossible to underrate. We have here to deal not merely with the clergy lands, nor with the opening of a chapel at Mexico, in which the Protestants may worship God in the form agreeable to their conscience: the question is a far wider one. In reality, the point to be settled is, whether the new Government of Mexico shall adopt the mass of those

liberal and progressive ideas to which all civilized States have successively rallied, or whether it shall run in the fated track of those antiquated maxims, according to which all Liberty, religious, political, or economic, is a curse.

What help is there for the Archduke against this retrograde spirit of the higher Mexican clergy, which tends to nothing less than to paralyse the excellent effects of the French intervention, and to precipitate Mexico afresh into an abyss of profound anarchy? There is but one, and that is in the Court of Rome. But what will the Holy See do? Will it interpose—if not to please France, at least out of gratitude to the House of Austria, which is more particularly a favourite with it? In brief, will it order the Mexican clergy to afford its co-operation to the measures by which the Archduke, enlightened as he is, will, as France would do, manifest his authority and characterize his Government? Such is the question that now presents itself, and the solution of which will not admit of delay.

The author ardently hopes that this second Roman Question may be solved in a manner conformable to the spirit of modern civilization,

He does not consider such an issue impossible, but he is compelled to avow,—and he does it with the utmost regret,—that at the present moment it seems to him scarcely probable. But as he has already said: "When the blind provocations of the Court of Rome obliged the General-in-chief of the Army of Italy to make the petty campaign of 1797, which terminated in the Treaty of Tolentino, did not the acts that marked the early years of the pontificate of Pius VII. seem as impossible as may now appear the adhesion of the Holy See to a Liberal policy? And would it not be to calumniate the Holy See to maintain that it will never rally to ideas the substance of which is in the Gospel itself, and out of the pale of which it has become clear to every man of sense there is nought for the pontifical authority but illusions, for the Church but perils?"

MICHEL CHEVALIER.

PARIS, *March* 10, 1864.

NOTE

THE French original is not accompanied by a Map; but on the Translator suggesting that such an addition would be exceedingly convenient to the reader for reference, the wish was instantly acceded to by the Publisher.

The Translator fears that, in one or two instances, the Spanish form of the Christian name of Cortez has been given instead of the French and English one—that is, that "Hernando" has been used in place of the "Fernando" which he intended to adhere to.

T. A.

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PART I.

MEXICAN CIVILIZATION PRIOR TO FERNANDO CORTEZ.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXPEDITION OF CORTEZ—HIS VOYAGE TO VERA CRUZ.

On the evening of Holy Thursday, in the year 1519, an armed flotilla came to an anchor between the coast of the American continent and the small island that now bears the name of San Juan de Ulua, which French geographers persist in calling Ulloa.* The men on board these vessels were young, and two priests were to be found among them. The age of their leader was thirty-four. Resolution and confidence beamed in their looks, and the dark tint of their complexion attested that this was not the first of their voyages and adventures under a burning sun. Some of them, who had visited the spot on a former expedition, were giving their com-

* Not so great a licence, however, as that of calling Ratisbon the city of Regensburg, and of metamorphosing the name of M. de Ripolstein into Ribeaupierre.

panions details as to the position of the country, the arrangement of the mountains and rivers, and the character of the natives. One of the new visitors, in close attendance on the captain, replied to his informants by singing some verses from an old ballad about the enchanter Montesinos. "This is France, Montesinos; here is Paris, that grand city; there the Douro rushing on to the sea;" intending thus to express that the expedition had at last reached a great empire.

Cortez it was who, after having touched at the Island of Cozumel, and made a rough campaign against the Indians of the province of Tabasco, in the peninsula of Yucatan, had turned towards the Mexican shores, where Grijalva,* some of

* Juan de Grijalva was the nephew of Diego Velasquez, the Governor of Cuba, who despatched him, with four vessels, to explore the coast of the continent, as the sequel to a voyage undertaken at his own cost and peril by Hernandez de Cordova, one of the Spaniards established at Cuba. This adventurer had touched at various points of Yucatan, of which he narrated surprising things. He spoke with wonder of the articles of gold he had seen there, of which he brought some fine specimens. Cordova's voyage was in 1517; that of Grijalva in the year following. Cordova had not proceeded beyond the peninsula of Yucatan. Grijalva sailed along not only that coast, but also a considerable extent of the Mexican shore. He had been at San Juan de Ulua, and at the island of Sacrificios. It was he, indeed, who gave them the names they still bear.

whose companions were with him, had before set foot. The account of this navigator, who was an intelligent man, the information collected by Cortez himself in Yucatan, and the vague rumours current in the neighbouring islands, agreed in stating that he would find on those shores a more powerful and more industrious people than any hitherto met with in the New World—a people, too, with much gold. When Cortez, seeing some ornaments of that metal among the people of Tabasco, inquired whence it came, the constant reply was, "from Culhua." This was the country now known as Mexico, the official name of which, for three centuries, was New Spain. The race in possession of it were the Aztecs.

Cortez and his companions had incurred the necessity of signalizing themselves by some great exploit. They had committed a fault which the laws of all States treat as a crime, and one that the leaders must expiate on the gibbet and their followers at the galleys unless atoned for by brilliant deeds. Their departure from Cuba was an act of flagrant rebellion. Velasquez, the Governor of Cuba, had been exceedingly struck by the account of Grijalva, who, at various points of the Mexican coast, had

had interviews with the natives, and even with some officers of Montezuma, the sovereign of the Aztec empire; and also the good luck to exchange some bead-ware and other trifles of European production for splendid specimens of workmanship in gold. He resolved, therefore, to send an expedition into a country that promised so much. He organized what was, for those times, a considerable armament—looking, at least, to the feeble resources of a young colony such as Cuba was—and for commander had made choice of Cortez, whose bravery and intelligence he had already proved. The latter embarked in the enterprise all that he possessed, and even much more, for he borrowed wherever he could. Warned that Velasquez, his jealousy having been excited and his old ill-feeling revived,* was preparing to take the command away from him, Cortez, by agreement with his lieutenants, set sail from Santiago de Cuba at sunrise on the 18th November, 1518, without

* Cortez had been in Cuba with Velasquez since 1511. He had served under that leader valiantly, but having excited his anger by acts of indiscipline and the looseness of his private life, had been thrown into prison. Velasquez pardoned him, however, after a series of rather romantic incidents.

having taken leave. Informed of what was passing, Velasquez hurried to the beach in time to see Cortez give the signal, and to hear an ironical request for his orders. From thence the audacious adventurer proceeded to complete his preparations, and recruit his little army, at other ports of the island, as Macaca, Trinidad, and Havana, continually followed by the impotent anathemas and vain orders of arrest launched by the enraged Velasquez, and as continually decoying away men and carrying off stores and munitions. He was, therefore, a revolter, a kind of bandit; and that, too, in the eyes and the knowledge of all his companions, who consequently were his avowed accomplices. But they were enchanted with the valiant spirit of their captain, and were all, or almost all, irritated by the sudden and unjust hostility exhibited towards him by Velasquez, after having induced him to invest in the expedition more than he possessed. Added to this, they were brave fellows, filled with the taste for a life of adventure. Many of them had served against the French in Italy, or against the Turks in the waters of the Levant. They had come to the resolution, easy for the Castilian of that age to hold, that they would be heroes; they believed

themselves certain of retrieving their rebellion by illustrious exploits.

When the expedition put to sea, Cortez and his companions judged of the Mexican populations whom they were going to encounter from the indigenous tribes of America with whom the Spaniards had been most in contact—those of Hispaniola (the name first given to San Domingo), Cuba, and the smaller isles around, an inoffensive, mild, and gentle race, entirely destitute of trade or manufactures — a childlike people, easy to conquer and rule over, howsoever numerous they might be. They must have been relieved from that illusion when they landed on the Mexican coast, near the Island of Sacrificios and the reefs of San Juan de Ulua, as well as by the bravery of the men with whom they had measured themselves on the shores of Yucatan. But the sentiment of danger found no access into souls of their strong temperament. What occupied them much more was the conviction that they were approaching a country of far greater riches than all the territories hitherto discovered in the New World. In that they were not deceived; Mexico had gold, and silver, and other wealth; but, as was said by the Spartan chief to the envoy from the Persian king, it was necessary *to*

come and take them. Now, for that feat they were but about 650 soldiers, including all the seamen, to the number of 110, that manned their vessels. Of this force thirteen only were arquebusiers, and thirty-two crossbow-men. 'Tis true, they were provided with some sort of artillery—ten pieces of ordnance and four falconets. They had horsemen, but to the number of sixteen only; and heaven knows what it had cost them to get together that small number of horses.* All the rest of the band were on foot, armed with swords, pikes, or clubs. The muster of his forces made by Cortez at Cape San Antonio, at the moment of definitively quitting the island of Cuba, exhibited a total of six hundred and sixty-three men; but losses had occurred since then, in conflicts with the natives of Yucatan and from disease.

Cortez carried with him into Mexico two persons who were to be useful to him in different degrees. These were interpreters. At the departure from Cuba there was on board the squadron a native of Yucatan, whom Grijalva

* Horses were very rare then in Cuba. Cortez had paid from 450 to 500, or on the average 475 *pesos de oro* per head. According to Prescott's estimate of the value of the *peso de oro*, 2*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*, each animal would cost 1246*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*

had made prisoner, and who had learnt a little of the Spanish language during his captivity. But he made his escape as soon as the expedition reached his native country. Cortez was, however, enabled to replace him advantageously by a Spaniard who, much against his will, had been resident in Yucatan for eight years. He was a monk, who had been shipwrecked on that coast, and had there endured a cruel slavery. Jeronimo de Aguilar, for so he was called, was a man of a simple and devoted heart. Unfortunately, he spoke only the dialect of Yucatan, which was unintelligible to the people of Mexico; but an intermediate interpreter was soon presented. The Cacique of Tabasco, a city of Yucatan, near which a battle had been fought between the Spaniards and the natives, on making peace, gave Cortez twenty female slaves. One of the number, and the handsomest, was born in Mexico, in the province of Guazacoalco. Her father, a rich and powerful Cacique, died when she was a girl. Her mother married again, and had a son by her second nuptials, to whom she was desirous of ensuring the wealth of her first husband. With that purpose she gave out that her daughter had died, and substituting the corpse of the child of one of her slaves, she sold her

own offspring to some traders. After a time the latter re-sold her to the Cacique of Tabasco, who made a present of her to the *Conquistador*. Doña Marina, for that was the name given her by the Spaniards, thus spoke both Mexican and the idiom of the Yucatanese. In conjunction with Aguilar, an interpreter was thus constituted that served for communication with the Mexicans, even before the girl had learnt Spanish. But within a brief delay she herself was completely competent. She was not long in thoroughly mastering the tongue, for love was her teacher. Captivated by her beauty, Cortez made her his mistress, and she was passionately fond of him. To be useful to him, she displayed that power of penetrating observation, that kind of divination, which the passion inspires. She rendered the greatest services to the Spaniards, for she more than once contributed to extricate them from extreme danger.

We have just stated what was the force of Cortez—six hundred and fifty men, and he was invading an empire!

It was not a savage tribe that he was now to find before him, but a strongly organized state.

From their communications with the people

of Tabasco, Cortez and his companions had gathered that the country we call Mexico had for the New World this peculiarity—that it was a nation whose opulence and power had no bounds in the opinion of the Yucatanese, who themselves were not strangers to the elements of civilization, for they cultivated various products, and their towns were well built. The Aztecs, the dominant race among the Mexicans, had carried their arms to a distance of hundreds of leagues from Tenochtitlan (the present Mexico), their capital. They had made great conquests, and had everywhere spread the terror of their name. Their law, or their supremacy, was recognised as far as Guatemala. The name of their emperor, Montezuma,* inspired great respect, mingled with still greater terror. A little while after his landing, Cortez had an interview with Teuhtlile, governor of the province, a soldier full of courtesy, remarkable for his intelligence and acuteness—a real courtier, if we may take the testimony of the chroniclers. Cortez having told this officer that he was the envoy of a great emperor, as renowned as his own master, Teuhtlile re-

* So Europeans have arranged the name, in order that it may sound agreeably to the ear. The exact word would appear to have been Moctheuzoma.

ceived with astonishment the news that there could exist a sovereign equal in power to Montezuma. Some weeks afterwards, in an interview with a cacique, Cortez asked him whose vassal he was. "Eh!" replied the chief, "whose can one be but Montezuma's?" Several months still later, when he had advanced into the interior, after his conflict with the Tlascalans, he interrogated another chief, to know whether Montezuma was his sovereign. "Of whom is Montezuma not the sovereign?" was the answer. Pomp was carried to the extreme around the prince; the basest offices about his person were discharged by men of rank. The etiquette was to speak to him with eyes cast down. When he reached Mexico, Cortez wrote to Charles V.:— "I think there is no soldan nor infidel prince known up to this time, who has himself waited on with so much display and magnificence;" and here, in the mouth of Cortez, this phrase of soldan and prince is a sort of superlative. The words, preserved by Bernal Diaz, with which the Aztec emperor welcomed Cortez when he gave him a first audience in his palace at Mexico, show what he was to the native populations: "Your friends at Tlascala have probably told you," said he, with a smile, "that I

am like to the gods, that I dwell in palaces of gold, and silver, and precious stones; but you see that those tales are without foundation. My palaces are, like the habitations of all mankind, of stone and wood. My body," added he, uncovering his arm, "is—look at it—of flesh and bone, like yours. Certainly I inherit from my ancestors an immense empire; I have great territories, and gold and silver; but——"

Let us rapidly examine what the Mexican empire was; in what state were the arts and sciences; what ideas and feelings prevailed there; what was its political and social organization; what was the religious belief and worship there: in a word, to what degree of civilization it had attained.

CHAPTER II.

ARTS AND SCIENCES AMONG THE ANCIENT MEXICANS.

POPULATION, the basis of all wealth, was abundant there. The accredited formula was that Montezuma could count thirty vassals, each able to put a hundred thousand men under arms. It is very likely that exaggerations yielding in nothing to those of the East were permitted in these Western regions, and I no more believe in Montezuma's three millions of soldiers than in the million of men transported by Xerxes from one side of the Hellespont to the other. However, in the letters of Cortez, and in the narratives of Bernal Diaz, or the other chroniclers who gathered their information from the actors, we are at every turn meeting with bodies of Mexican soldiery numbering forty or fifty thousand. Everything tends to prove that the country was then more populous than it is now.

In some of the provinces the towns were close together. All round the basin of the lakes on the celebrated plateau or mountain plain of Anahuac,* more fertile and smiling than it can be in our days,† there were twenty cities, the memory of whose magnificence is yet preserved. Beside the superb capital, springing, like Venice, from the bosom of the waters, there were Tezcuco and Tlacopan, residences of the sovereign; Iztapalapan, a fief of the emperor's brother; Chalco, Xochimilco, Xoloc, Culhuacan, Popotla, Tepejacac, Ajotzingo, Teotihuacan, &c., almost all now reduced to miserable villages, like the capitals of the Grecian states—like Thebes and Memphis—more fortunate still than Babylon, Nineveh, and Persepolis, whose sites are barely known. Mexico had more than 300,000 souls. It was far more extensive than

* The name borne before the conquest, and still preserved by the vast and elevated plateau that forms a good portion of the existing territory of Mexico. It signifies "adjoining the water," referring to the lakes that occupy the centre. Originally it applied only to the valley of Mexico.

† Because the Spaniards, with the object of putting Mexico out of the reach of inundations, have partially drained the expanse of water in the neighbourhood of the capital. They have thus laid bare a large extent of land impregnated with salt, on which nothing will grow.

the modern city built by Cortez on the same spot, and yet the latter reckons 150,000 inhabitants;* Tezcuco had 150,000, Iztapalapan at least 60,000. At the foot of the opposite decline of the snowy chain that looks down on Mexico, the at once sarcerdotal and trading city of Chololan (Cholula) held not less than 150,000 souls.

A numerous population is the sure index of a certain advancement in civilization. Where a great number of men are aggregated in one spot, there must be industry to feed, clothe, and lodge them, and regular laws to fix their respective rights and duties. In order to maintain peace in that multitude, there need measures of order and foresight: foresight and order imply the difficult science of organization.

Agriculture, the first of arts, the nursing-mother of states, flourished in the Aztec empire.

* "On the road that leads to Tanepantla and the Ahuahetes you may progress for more than an hour among the ruins of the ancient city. One thus perceives, as on the route to Tacuba and Iztapalapan, how much smaller is the Mexico rebuilt by Cortez than the Tenochtitlan of the last of the Montezumas. The enormous size of the Tlatelolco market, the limits of which are still discernible, proves how very considerable must have been the population of the old city." Humboldt, "Essai Politique sur La Nouvelle Espagne," vol. ii. p. 43.

In virtue of a wonderful privilege, to which we shall revert hereafter in some detail, the Mexican soil is adapted to every kind of culture. It presents in a limited space, under the Torrid Zone, a succession of all climates, from the burning plains of its Atlantic shores, in the vicinity of the equator, to the summits of its snowy mountains, where while the eye is gazing downwards into warm valleys, the foot is treading on the vegetation of Iceland or Hudson's Bay. Thus the Mexican *flora* offered a very great variety, even before Europeans had enriched it with useful vegetables indigenous to their own countries, or borrowed long before from Asia. The ancient Mexicans had thus a diversity of produce, responding to their different wants. Maize and the banana formed the basis of their aliment. Cocoa furnished a drink grateful to the mighty Montezuma, and which Spain and all Europe delight in to this day: this was chocolate, still designated by its Aztec name (*chocolatl*). They possessed neither coffee nor the sugar-cane, but they extracted sugar from the stalk of the maize. They cultivated medicinal plants of many kinds; and among others that which with us bears the name of jalap, after the city of Jalapa or Xalapa, a place we shall often have to mention, where

the neighbourhood produces it in quantities. One of the wild plants of their forests yielded them vanilla, of which Mexico long had a monopoly. From their cactuses they gathered cochineal, which is in our own time still one of the principal objects of Mexican commerce. Cotton, wherewith to clothe themselves, was a great article of culture.

One of the specialties presented by the Aztecs to the Spaniards was tobacco, which they called *Yetl:* they smoked it and took it in the shape of snuff. There is reason to believe, however, that this was an enjoyment reserved for the wealthy.

The most curious of their products was that from an aloe, the *agave Americana*, commonly known among them under the name of *maguey*, upon which we will dwell for an instant, since it is one of the specialties of Aztec civilization. Every people have sought out and possessed themselves of some fermented beverage, and in the eyes of the physiologist one of the great marvels of Islamism is to have succeeded in binding down the Orientals to abstinence from all such drinks.* From this general want of mankind has resulted the care bestowed on the cultivation of the vine throughout the Western

* We may suppose that coffee serves them instead.

civilization,* so far as climate has permitted and no obstacle has been interposed by despotic laws, such as we shall have to mention hereafter. The Aztecs did not possess our vine, *vitis vinifera*,† which, imported since the Conquest, has succeeded well on the plateau of Anahuac; but the maguey stood them in stead, furnishing them with *pulque*, a beverage to their taste. The maguey cultivated for pulque is planted in long lines, rather more than three yards apart. It requires little care till the time it shows for flower, which happens only after an interval of several years—ten, twelve, or even more. When the stalk destined to bear the handsome flower

* What we here term "Western civilization" comprehends Europe, America, and the parts of Asia and Africa where Christianity prevails, or where its place is occupied by the two religions so closely allied to it, Judaism and Mahometanism. The nations of Eastern civilization have had other fermented beverages. The Chinese get theirs from rice, almost as beer is a fermented liquor made from barley. Other nations have fermented the saccharine juice of various different plants. The Tartars ferment mare's milk.

† The vine abounded on the new continent, and there is reason to believe that from thence came the name it received from the Scandinavian navigators, the first Europeans that penetrated there (in the tenth and eleventh centuries). That name, indeed, was *Vinland*. But it is not a vine whose fruit is fit for making wine.

that distinguishes the agave is on the point of shooting up, it is cut at the bottom, so as to leave a hollow between the group of thick leaves that constitute the mass of the plant, in which to receive the sap that would have formed the substance of the stalk. The dimensions of the plant are such that the cavity thus produced is from eighteen inches to nearly two feet in depth, with a diameter of eleven to fifteen inches. The juice that flows into this sort of cup is collected daily, or even several times in the day, and consists of a sweet liquid, thence called honey-water (*aguamiel*). This is easily brought to ferment by mixing with it a portion of the same juice, preserved for that purpose from a previous occasion. The fermentation is very speedy, and converts the *aguamiel* into *pulque*. Unfortunately, it is rare that the liquor thus prepared does not in a short time contract a slight odour of rotten eggs, probably arising from want of cleanliness in the manufacture of the pulque, and from the ordinary mode of transport, as it is generally sent to market in skins. It is reckoned that a good head of maguey gives daily from a gallon to a gallon and three-quarters of juice, convertible into almost the same quantity of pulque, the average duration of the supply being

from two to three months—or a total for each head of from 670 to 1550 gallons. It is true, the plant dies after the operation, and has to be replaced by a new one; but the maguey always has numerous shoots springing up around the mother stem. A good deal of time is required, however, to bring the young plant to maturity. But it must be borne in mind that the cultivation calls for very little care, whilst with us the vine requires numerous dressings.

The production of pulque is not the only use of the maguey. The leaves, ground to a pulp, are turned into a white paper fit for writing on, and employed for that purpose. The fibre of the leaves is successfully adopted by the weaver, in place of hemp or flax, and is also serviceable to the ropemaker. The prickles with which it is armed stand to the poor in place of needles or pins. In their whole state the thick leaves are used for thatching houses. The root yields an agreeable and nourishing food. In short, the maguey was a treasure to the ancient Mexicans, and continues to be a favourite for cultivation. Pulque is at this very hour the drink of the Mexican nation, and is met with not merely in the lower sort of taverns and among the poor, but European tables are the only ones where it

is not daily served. On nearing the towns vast fields are seen, with clumps of aloes ranged in the quincunx form—to which those found in Europe, whether in the open air or the greenhouse, are not to be compared. This is the maguey, whose juice delights the Mexican palate and enriches the treasury, while the plant retains most of the uses to which it was applied by the Aztecs. Paper, for example, has not ceased to be made from it.* The maguey and the nopal (*cactus*), are the two plants characteristic of the Mexican table-land. In uncultivated districts there are immense tracts offering nothing to the eye but magueys and nopals, isolated or in scattered clumps—a strange and melancholy vegetation, that stands insensible to the whistling of the wind, instead of replying to it, as do our waving forests, with a thrill of animation. The silent inflexibility of the aloes and nopals might make the traveller fancy, as he loses sight of the villages, that he is traversing one of those countries he has been told of in fairy tales, where an angry genie has petrified all nature.

Mexican agriculture was proficient in the art of irrigation. Canals, which have been allowed

* Prescott names two manufactories of paper from maguey.

to fill up in many parts since the conquest, spread wonderful fertility over vast districts. The works of irrigation to be noticed at this day around Cholula and Puebla date from the time of the Aztecs, or even from that of their predecessors, the Toltecs. The woodman's craft was known and practised among them. Severe regulations prevented the destruction of timber in the valley of Mexico. The rulers recognised the use of forests in tempering the heats of summer, and in feeding up the water-courses so necessary to moisture. Inferior in this, also, to those they succeeded, the Spaniards carried to the Mexican mountain-plain that horror of trees, which they probably inherit of the pastoral people from whom they are descended, and which has made that of Castille the most naked and dismal of all plains. Wood is now deficient in Mexico, and the genius of man has been taxed to supply it, in devising a method for extracting the silver from the ore, which, in place of employing fire, introduces chemical re-agents, the principal of which is mercury,—and the method is thence called the cold process.

If Mexican agriculture was great in vegetable riches—if in that it far surpassed the resources the soil of Europe was able to offer to its first

inhabitants, with regard to animals, on the contrary, it was extremely poor. It possessed no beasts of burden: the ox, the horse, the ass, and the camel were alike wanting.* The ancient Mexicans had not even the alpaca, which served certain uses of transport in Peru. The sheep and the goat were also unknown to them.† It is not easy to conceive how we could do without the ovine race, which supplies numerous wants by its milk and fleece, to say nothing of its flesh. The goat is in many countries a valuable animal, were it only from its adroitness in finding a subsistence in the wildest and most rugged districts. But the presence of the larger animals, such as

* We are not saying that America was, before the arrival of Europeans, absolutely and completely destitute of the bovine race, as it was of horses. In the great plains west of the Mississippi, and in the valleys adjoining that of the Rio Bravo del Norte, North America offers two species of the wild ox; but it is a long way from the valley of Mexico to the Rio Bravo del Norte, and in their migrations on their way from Atzlan, the Aztecs probably held far to the west of the regions peopled by those quadrupeds, so that, not having seen them, they could take none with them.

† Animals of the goat and sheep species existed in the mountains of Old California, but no use was made of them; and they were confined to a peninsula that appears not to have been visited either by the Aztecs, or their predecessors, the Toltecs.

the ox, the horse, and the camel, who submit easily to man and render him the convenient aid of considerable muscular force, is an important condition of the progress most dear to the friends of humanity—that which raises the material lot of the largest number, and invests it with moral dignity. Wherever beasts of burden exist not, man must take their place: thence a servile existence for a part of the population. Everything then in the Aztec empire was carried on men's backs: the chiefs were borne in litters on the shoulders of *tamanes* (porters were so designated). *A fortiori*, the tillage of the fields was all done by the hand of man. Thus it is in China, in our own days, that when you leave the valleys of the great rivers, or get far from the canals, the human back is the ordinary conveyance, and the cultivation of the soil is principally effected by the strength of the arm. This behindhand state of things ceased in Mexico after the conquest, and man was no longer the mechanical instrument of locomotion. Mules for merchandize, asses for the markets of the towns, and horses for travellers, relieved him from that painful and humiliating labour. In the mountainous districts alone has the custom been perpetuated of carrying heavy burdens, even of

wood, on men's backs.* With still greater ease did animals displace the human species in the labours of the field.

Animal food, not to be obtained therefore either from the ox or the sheep, was furnished them by the chase and by the few animals that had been domesticated. In that number we find a kind of dog called the *techichi.* We know that the Chinese have the same custom of eating the dog. But the principal resource of the Mexicans in this way was the turkey, which they reared in great quantities, the name in their language being *totolin.* Cortez relates that there were several thousands of them in the yards of Montezuma's palaces; and Bernal Diaz reports that two hundred of them were daily devoted to the sustenance of the wild beasts in the Emperor's menagerie—which proves two things, that the menagerie was very large, and that the turkey must have been of very little value. Europe is indebted to Mexico for this useful bird.

For the transmission of news and orders, Montezuma had relays of men organized to a speed nearly equal to that of the mails that

* The ordinary load for a man was from sixty to eighty pounds.

conveyed the letters in France before the days of railways. Thanks to such rapid couriers, his sumptuous table was served with fish that were swimming the day before in the Gulf of Mexico or off the beach of Acapulco. Now-a-days, though horses are abundant in Mexico, and there is a carriage road from the capital to Vera Cruz, no one would dare to entertain such a fancy.

As if in gratitude to Nature, who had been so prodigal to them in the treasures of the vegetable kingdom, the Mexicans had a passion for flowers. They collected together in splendid gardens such as were remarkable for their perfume or their brilliancy of colour. To these they added medicinal plants, methodically arranged; such of their shrubs as were distinguished by their blossoms or their foliage, the excellence of their fruit or their berries; and trees of elegant or majestic appearance. They delighted in laying out their terraces and bowers on hilly slopes, where they looked as if suspended. They thus equalled the celebrated gardens of Semiramis, ranked by antiquity—and the moderns have accepted the verdict—among the Wonders of the World. Aqueducts brought thither waters from a distance, which overflowed in cascades, or filled spacious basins tenanted by

the choicest fish. Mysterious pavilions were hidden among the foliage, and statues reared their forms amid the flowers. All the kinds of animals that we assemble in our gardens consecrated to science, such as the Paris Jardin des Plantes or the London Zoological Gardens, contributed to the ornament or curiosity of these resorts of pleasure. Birds were there of beautiful plumage, confined in cages as large as houses; there also were wild beasts, animals of various kinds, and even serpents. Bernal Diaz there first beheld the rattlesnake, which he describes as having *castanets in its tail.* At that very time Europe had no gardens of the sort.* In reading the narrative of the conquest, we are struck with admiration for the garden of King Nezahualcoyotl, at Tezcotzinco (two leagues from Tezcuco)—a hanging garden on the side of a hill, whose summit was reached by five hundred steps, and crowned by a basin, whence, by an effort of hydraulic skill, water flowed successively into three other reservoirs, adorned with gigantic statues. We are made to dwell, also, on the description of the gardens with which

* The first *jardin des plantes* established in Europe was that at Padua, founded in 1445; the others date from a much later epoch.

Cuitlahuac, the brother and ephemeral successor of Montezuma, embellished his residence at Iztapalapan; and on those of a mere cacique at Huaxtepec, which, according to the statement of Cortez in his third letter to Charles V., were not less than two leagues round. We are astonished at what Montezuma himself had accumulated in the very bosom of Mexico. The traveller of the present day who wanders at Chapoltepec under the shade of the enormous cypresses bearing the name of the monarch just mentioned,* but really anterior to that prince, and, overpowered with reminiscences, treads the soil ages ago consecrated to imperial sepulture, comprehends all the Aztec ruler was able to accomplish by the art of his gardeners in the plain surrounding that solitary hill of porphyry, by aiding the action of a tropical sun with that of the pure water that springs from the foot of the rock. He finds reason in what is called the folly of the young viceroy, Galvez, who, to enjoy the magnificent spectacle all around, had a superb castle built on the summit, now already reduced to a heap of ruins. The humblest private individuals shared the taste for flowers of the great. When, shortly after his landing, Cortez made his

* The trunks are above seventeen yards in circumference.

entry into the town of Cempoalla, the natives of both sexes came out to meet him, and mingled with his soldiery, bearing bouquets and garlands of flowers, with which they decked the neck of the horse of Cortez, crowning the helmet of the rider with a chaplet of roses.

Another curiosity existed in the *chinampas*, or floating gardens, scattered on the lakes. Masses of weeds swimming on the surface, or rafts covered with herbage, doubtless suggested the idea to the Aztecs at the time when, like the Jews, they were undergoing a preparation for their future greatness under the rough sway of some Pharaoh, the head of a foreign nation to whom they were subjected. The land being meted out to them, as the Bible says the straw was to the Hebrews, they created more, by linking together on the surface of the lake collections of reeds or branches, on which they spread a slight covering of earth. The custom endured after the Aztecs had become masters. These artificial islets, of fifty to a hundred yards long, served for the cultivation of vegetables and flowers for the market of the capital. Some had consistency enough for shrubs of some size to grow on, or to bear even a hut of light material. They were at pleasure moored to the bank with

poles, or made to move forward with their floral treasures by the same means. This spectacle struck the Spaniards greatly, and, according to Bernal Diaz, made them say that they had been transported into an enchanted region, similar to those they had read of in "Amadis de Gaul," a romance of popular celebrity at that period.

The arts and trades of the ancient Mexicans produced not only what was indispensable to the necessaries of life, but also for articles of luxury. They were clever in weaving cotton and the fibre of the aloe; from cotton they made a sort of cuirass (*escaupil*), impenetrable to arrows; they knew how to tint their cloths with a large variety of mineral or vegetable colours: I have before mentioned cochineal, which is literally an animal colour. They baked pottery for domestic use, and, like the Russians of our own day, made utensils of varnished wood. They had no iron: that useful metal was not known, or at least was not in great use, on either continent, till long after civilization had spread; but similar in that to the Egyptians and elder Greeks, for their tools they used bronze, which by hammering acquires great hardness.* Bronze,

* The use of bronze in place of steel, as attested by the discoveries at Pompeii, held its ground to a comparatively late date in civilization.

however, was not common among them, since they employed for the same purpose obsidian (called by them *iztli*), a vitreous mineral substance, but harder than glass, belonging to volcanic regions. They excelled in giving an edge to this natural glass, making out of it knives, razors (for though less bearded than ourselves, they had barbers), and pike or arrow heads. From their mines, though rudely worked, they extracted lead, tin, silver, gold, and copper. They were proficients in fashioning the precious metals. The ornaments and vases of gold and silver that Cortez received from Montezuma before reaching the table-land, and those he found at Mexico, were moulded, soldered, sculptured by the graver, enriched with cut stones, and enamelled, with a skill at least equal to that then attained by the majority of the goldsmiths of Europe; and the latter admitted themselves vanquished, if we may credit the authors contemporary to the conquest. "No prince in the known world," writes Cortez to Charles V., "possesses jewels of so great a value;" and he clearly states that the working was in no way inferior to the material.

Whilst on the topic of these achievements of the goldsmith and the jeweller, we may make the reflection that it was in Mexico as in all aristo-

cratic and despotic countries—the enjoyments of the few absorb the existence of the greater number, and the maxim is applicable that Lucan puts into the mouth of Cæsar, *Humanum paucis vivit genus.** Mexican civilization had the superfluous, and was often deficient in the necessary. The same reflection naturally presents itself to the mind in reference to another art practised by the Aztecs with great success, that of feathered stuffs. The country, like all tropical regions, abounds in birds of beautiful plumage. The feathers, artistically plaited on a groundwork of cotton, and sometimes associated with the skin of an animal, formed tissues of the most rich and varied colours, exact also in design, which were employed for the garb of the rich and the decoration of palaces and temples. This branch of industry occupied many hands, and the products created a sensation in Europe.

In the day of battle a Mexican chief was decked in a mantle of feathers, worn above his gold cuirass. He bore a helmet of wood or copper, and sometimes of silver, shaped like the fierce head of the animal that served as his family emblem, with a plume of feathers of his own colours. His arms were garnished with bracelets;

* "The human race lives for a few."

a collar of gold and precious stones hung low on the breast. Many had a buckler, embossed, and fringed with plaited feathers. Their arms were the bow, the sling, the javelin, the pike, and the *maquahuitl*, a kind of sword wielded with both hands, like those of the Middle Ages, about a yard long, two-edged, and formed of blades of obsidian, fixed in a hilt of wood. The point of the arrows and pikes was often of copper. They could form in bodies and columns, and knew how to defile with some degree of order. The first time he came in front of such adversaries, the European had reason to dread he should not easily get the better of them. That was the notion that struck the mind of Cortez when he found himself face to face with Tlascalans, who were less polished and less instructed than the Mexicans, far less luxurious, and not so well armed, but not less valiant.

The architecture of the Aztecs was monumental. The Mexican soil furnished a variety of stone of volcanic origin, kinds of lava or amygdaloids, of great resistance. The *tetzontli*, of all these kinds that most employed in Mexico, is porous, and consequently light, which renders it specially adapted for building; to this advantage it adds that of being hard and imper-

vious. For sculpture, which they made much use of, turning out, however, only hideous objects, like the statues of India and China, they had black and variegated porphyry. The palaces were spacious, but almost all of a single story, and composed of several buildings distributed over a vast enclosure—a disposition resembling that of the Chinese palaces. They were wainscoted with odoriferous woods, skilfully carved. Externally, the walls were covered with white solid stucco, that made them glisten in the sun. When the Spaniards came for the first time on a Mexican city (that of Cempoalla), the horsemen in advance, deceived by this appearance and by their own imagination, returned to their comrades at a gallop to announce that the houses were coated with plates of silver. Internally, the apartments of the great were adorned with marble and porphyry, when they were not hung with cloth of feathers. The temples were grand pyramids of bricks burnt in the sun, or of earth merely, with a facing of stone, surmounted with sanctuaries and towers adorned with images of the gods. Fires were burning on the summit day and night, which in the obscurity of tropical darkness gave these edifices a mysterious aspect.

The vastness of the temples and palaces, the enormous labour implied in the edifices of all kinds massed together in the valley of Mexico, among the number of which must be mentioned the causeways of masonry thrown across the lake, extorted cries of admiration from the *conquistadores*. When Cortez, in his reports to Charles V., mentions the city of Iztapalapan, which he passed through before entering Montezuma's capital, it is to tell him that there are palaces to be compared with the most beautiful Spain can offer. In regard to Mexico, when the obstinate defence of Guatemozin compels him to demolish it house by house, he tells the Emperor that it is with bitter regret, "because it is *the most beautiful thing in the world.*"

Mechanical science was in its infancy in Mexico: in that the most famous peoples of antiquity were scarcely more advanced. However, the Mexicans had succeeded in moving great masses—somewhat less enormous, indeed, than those of the Egyptians. Such, for example, was the Calendar Stone, now built into the walls of the cathedral in Mexico (Prescott estimates the weight at nearly fifty tons), which made a land journey of several leagues.

Father Toribio, a monk, who wrote imme-

diately after the conquest, and who has left one of the best works we have on the civilization of the Mexicans, characterizes their industrial knowledge in these terms:—

In general they are ignorant of nothing connected with either the labours of the field or the town. One Indian never has need of recourse to another to construct for himself a house, or procure him the necessary materials. In what locality soever they may be, they know where to find the wherewith to join, to sever, or to saw what they choose, and to light a fire. The very children know the names and the qualities of every animal, tree, and herb, though there are a thousand varieties, as well as of the multitude of roots which they use for food. All know how to dress a stone, build a house, make a rope or cable of rushes, and procure what is needed for the purpose. In short, they are acquainted with every trade not demanding great talent or delicate tools. When night overtakes them in the open country, they construct huts in an instant, especially if they are travelling with chiefs or Spaniards; then all, whoever they may be, put their hands to the work with a willing heart.

The multiplicity of the products of their industry is further certified by the descriptions, of which we have a tolerable number, of the market of Mexico, held every five days. This was a square surrounded with porticos, said by Cortez to be twice as large as the city of Sala-

manca, in which 60,000 persons could traffic with ease. The order that reigned among this multitude and presided in their transactions, the rapidity with which special magistrates settled disputes and punished infractions of the law, are still more irrefragable proofs of the height in the scale to which these people had arrived.

Their monetary system had for basis two metals—gold and tin. The richer of the two was put into quills in the shape of gold-dust—a rude way of measuring the quantity. The tin was cut into the shape of a T, a plan that favoured the pieces being tolerably equal in size. At first sight it may be thought surprising that, with their skill in working in gold and silver, they should have had no idea of minting money in a regular form; but the Chinese are not more advanced in that respect at this very hour than were the Aztecs then. In China, silver, which is the principal instrument of exchange, is taken by weight and standard, and is not, as with us, made into coins uniform in those respects. Cocoa served instead of copper coin. This use for grains of cocoa subsisted long after the conquest, and I am not sure that it has ceased even yet.

Proofs in sufficient number may be found, however, of the infancy of the arts among the Aztecs. One of the most striking would be what we are told of them, that they had no notion of weight: but is that assertion well founded? Prescott considers it as likely; Humboldt nowhere mentions it. The idea of weight is so elementary that at least we may be permitted to doubt. One thing appears certain: in the markets of Mexico everything was measured by quantity or the number of pieces. So Cortez reports to Charles V.; but he guards himself from saying that the notion of weight had escaped these people.

What has been stated enables us to form an opinion of the condition of the arts and sciences among the ancient Mexicans, and that opinion will assuredly be advantageous to them. On this point it is not superfluous to call to mind that, in his letters to Charles V., Cortez asserts that he exaggerates nothing; and indeed they bear the impress of circumspection and reserve. Cortez always conducted himself towards his sovereign as a loyal subject, anxious to bring to his knowledge whatever might enlighten him on the countries he was adding to his empire. Here is an extract:—

A complete report on the usages and customs of these peoples, on the administration and government of this capital and of the other cities belonging to this sovereign, would require a great deal of time and a large number of very able writers. I cannot, therefore, render an account to your majesty of a hundredth part of the facts that deserve to be reported; but I shall do what is possible to relate a few as well as I can, of which I have been an eye-witness, so marvellous that they pass all belief, and for which we cannot account to our own selves. The only reproach that can be addressed to me is, that of having made an incomplete report; but it shall never be said that I have exaggerated facts, neither here nor in anything that I shall write, for it appears to me just to set forth the truth to my prince and master as clearly as possible, without admitting anything that could obscure or exaggerate it.

To refer to only one detail connected with this advanced industrial state, how could Cortez have exaggerated on the subject of the beauty of the articles of goldsmith's work manufactured by the Mexicans, when he was sending the very things to Charles V.? Las Casas, Oviedo, and Peter Martyr, who saw them in Spain with their own eyes, join their testimony on this point to that of the *Conquistador*.

The written and spoken notation in use among the Aztecs was simple. It was founded on the number twenty, which was represented

by a flag. The basis of the system was thus divisible not only by the number five—which all peoples appear to have agreed on, doubtless from the fingers—but also by the number four, which implies the division by two. It is admitted that the weak side of the decimal system is the impossibility of dividing the number ten, which is its basis, by four.* Their signs represented what are called in arithmetic the successive *powers* of 20—that is, 20 times 20, or 400, was indicated by a feather; 20 times 400, or 8000, was depicted by a purse or sack; and they rarely had need of going beyond this third power, because they combined its sign with their other emblems. It is as if we had successive figures for the numbers ten, ten times ten or a hundred, ten times a hundred or a thousand. The numbers from one to twenty were represented by setting down a dot for every unit. This written arithmetic, though very inferior to

* The number ten, the basis of the decimal notation, is reproached with not being divisible by either four or three. Regret has often been expressed that the number twelve was not substituted for it both in written and spoken notation, which would then have been represented by the figure 1 followed by 0, *ten* and *eleven* being designated, consequently, by two special figures, in addition to the nine we have already.

that we derive from the Hindoos through the medium of the Arabs, which is founded on the ingenious idea of value by position,* is quite equal to that of the Greeks and Romans; it resembles the latter prodigiously, insomuch as the principal Roman figures correspond to the successive powers of ten. The signs for twenty, four hundred, and eight thousand, were divided into halves or quarters, so as to indicate a greater variety of numbers without much complication. Thus 200 was depicted by the half of a pen, 6000 by three-quarters of a purse or sack.

The Mexicans had more than one method of writing. Not only did they use hieroglyphic signs, both *figurative* and *symbolic*, but, like the ancient Egyptians, they had also phonetic signs, representing not a thing, an action, or an idea, but a sound. From thence to the alphabet is but a step, or rather, it is the alphabet already; but they made far less use of the valuable discovery of phonetic signs than did the Egyptians; they confined themselves almost entirely to the figurative and symbolic. The result was, that the writing had to be greatly aided by the

* That is, on the understanding that by moving the place of a figure one step to the left, its value is increased tenfold.

memory. Their books, which were on leaves like ours, and not on rolls like those of the ancients, were collected in libraries. Unhappily, almost all of them have been burnt. The responsibility of this deeply to be regretted conflagration lies on the first Archbishop of Mexico. That prelate is to be commended for the warmth with which he protected the Indians against the rapacity of the colonists, come like birds of prey to devour the fruits of conquest; but in his zeal to destroy the traditions of Aztec paganism, he became furiously bent on sweeping off every monument of their literature. He sought out all the manuscripts in the country, and made a solemn bonfire of them in the great square of Mexico. They formed quite a mountain, according to the writers of the time; and each individual set his heart on imitating the deplorable example, thinking to show thereby his devotion to religion.

The state of their astronomical knowledge would seem to denote remarkable means of observation or unheard-of good fortune in their calculations. They had succeeded in arriving at the length of the year not only better than the Romans of the time of Cæsar, but even better than official Europe under Francis I. and

Charles V. Their method of intercalation, to provide for the fraction of the day that makes up the exact duration of the *tropical* year, is nearly equivalent to that established by the Gregorian reform. The latter intercalated four-and-twenty days in a hundred years; the Aztecs intercalated five-and-twenty in a hundred and four years.* The difference is very slight. The length of the tropical year is 365 days, and a fraction above, of 5h. 48m. 49s. This fraction of nearly a quarter of a day *per annum*, obliging the intercalation of an entire day, or, after a certain period, of several days, was, in the calendar introduced by Julius Cæsar, set down as exactly a quarter; so that in the time of Pope Gregory XIII. we were ten days ahead. The Gregorian reform, decreed in 1582, which intercalates a day every four years, except in the year ending the century—and then the exception can occur but three centuries out of four—estimates the fraction at 5h. 49m. 12s. The ordinary year of the Gregorian Calendar is too long, therefore, by 23 seconds, or a day in four thousand years.† Among the Mexicans the ordinary year put the

* More exactly, ninety-seven in four hundred years.

† Thence it results that we have to set ourselves right by *unbissextilizing* a year every forty centuries.

fraction at 5h. 46m. 9s., and was therefore almost in conformity to the celebrated calculation of the Caliph Almamon's astronomers.

Laplace, struck with this approximation of the Mexicans, was inclined to attribute it to some communication with Asia, but was stopped by a judicious reflection. "How is it (he asked), if this exact determination of the length of the year was transmitted to them by the north of Asia, that they have a division of time so different from those in use in that part of the world?" * It is better, then, to conclude that the people of Mexico arrived of themselves at this result, so close to the truth.

This correct estimate of the year was to them a fact not without consequences, as the return of the feasts and religious ceremonies was rigorously calculated in unison with it. A reason the more for giving them the honour of it.

* "Système du Monde," Book V. chap. iii.

CHAPTER III.

THE LITERATURE OF THE MEXICANS.

I HAVE said that the Mexicans had books. They possessed, in fact, a real historical and poetical literature. They made verses, they composed songs and odes. The city of Tezcuco, the flourishing capital of the Acolhuans, was signalized by its love of letters. The purest and most refined of the Anahuac dialects was spoken there. To repeat Prescott's phrase, it was the Athens of the New World. Every illustrious family throughout Mexico sent their sons thither, according to Boturini, that they might learn the niceties of the language, and poetry, moral philosophy, theology, astronomy, medicine, and history. A literary and scientific spirit was in full activity there in the reign of Nezahualcoyotl,* a glorious prince, who just a century before the

* The name signifies "the famished fox," and indicates the prince's craftiness and the harsh experiences of his youth.

Spaniards came, reconquered the throne of his fathers, from which he had been driven by an usurper. He created an academy under the title of the Council of Music, which combined administrative and political functions with its literary business. It was a body that might be said to be devoted to the Muses, a conservator of good traditions and taste, and a protector of young talent. On certain solemn days authors came before it to recite their poems and receive prizes. The three Mexican sovereigns, the kings of Tezcuco, Tenochtitlan (Mexico), and Tlacopan—*las tres cabezas*, to use the ordinary phrase of the Spanish narratives—were members of this body, and participated in its labours, nearly as Napoleon I. did in those of the Institute. They did honour to themselves by having for colleagues in that capacity the best-informed men in the country, whatever might be their birth. As a Council of Censors, this assembly had to judge works of astronomy, history, chronology, and other sciences, before they were handed over to public perusal; but we are to believe that this preventive function was not always exercised, for it summoned authors and punished them after publication. And here we find a specimen of the cruelty of

the penal code of these people. An historical falsehood was punished with death, if committed with deliberate intention. Lastly, it was a Council of Public Instruction, conferring on professors their diplomas and superintending the general course of study.

King Nezahualcoyotl did not disdain to take a place among the poets who competed before the Academy. He thus paid tribute to the arts with more discretion and grandeur than Nero when he sang before the people, or than Louis XIV. when he appeared in ballets; and it is nowhere said that he was ever guilty of literary meannesses, that he was jealous of his rivals, as was Richelieu of Corneille, or that, intolerant of critics, as were the Greek tyrants, he ever sent them to the mines. This prince was, indeed, really the first poet of his day. He presents a good deal of resemblance to two great rulers of the East—King David and the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid. Like the first, he raised up a monarchy in ruins; like the second, he was magnificent; like them both, he was a legislator, and organized a general administration centering in his own person. He discharged his administrative duties with zeal, intelligence, and success, and land uncultivated was scarcely to

be found in his dominions. Like the Caliph of Bagdad, he was fond of assuming disguises, and of strolling about his capital with his Mesrour and Giafar, mingling with the people to learn what was thought of his government, and seeking adventures that gave him the opportunity of displaying his noble qualities. An episode is to be found in his life, of which all the circumstances seem to be a reproduction of the love of David for Bathsheba, the wife of the ill-fated Uriah. His odes, some of which are extant, are certainly not on a level with the Psalms of the King of Judah. It is very difficult to judge of their form from translations, probably somewhat free; but their sentiment is well worth attention. They breathe a philosophy of gentle melancholy, but full of confidence in another life. His maxims, collected from various sources, and set out with a multitude of details as to his life and government, by Ixtlixochitl, an Indian directly descended from him, who wrote in Spanish, are of rare beauty. From his religious notions, one would think he was conversant with Plato, or with St. Paul. On regaining the throne of his fathers, he granted a general amnesty, giving utterance to the words, "A king punishes, but does not revenge." We

can fancy we are listening to Louis XII. saying that "the King of France does not avenge the injuries of the Duke of Orleans." He built a magnificent temple, and placed on the altar the following inscription, which recals that at Athens, turned to such happy account by St. Paul, "To the Unknown God, the Cause of Causes." For those who would like to judge of the character of his poetry, here is an unembellished extract from one of his odes:*—

The transitory pomps of this life are like the green willows, which, though they arrive at an advanced age, end by being consumed in the fire. The hatchet hews them down, the hurricane uproots them: old age and decrepitude bow us down and sadden us.

All things on earth are destined to perish. In the height of splendour, in the intoxication of joy, an unpitying weakness seizes on them, and they fall to the dust.

The round world is a sepulchre. Of all that is reared and lives on its surface, there is not a thing but must return to earth. The rivers, the torrents, and the springs run their course, without ever revisiting the pleasant spots that witnessed their birth. They hasten

* M. Ternaux-Compans has, in his collection, reprinted from Granados y Galvez, the Otomie text with a Spanish translation, which he has put into French. He has added another ode, in Spanish and French, which may be called "A Lamentation."

on as if they longed to precipitate themselves into the bottomless gulf of Tluloca (the god of the sea). What was yesterday is to-day no longer; and of what is existing to-day, who can say how much will remain to-morrow?

The rottenness of the tombs are bodies heretofore animated by the living souls of mighty men, who sat on thrones, presided over assemblies, led armies to victory, subjugated empires, decreed to themselves the homage and adoration of men, puffed themselves up with vain pride, and gorged themselves with dominion.

But all these glories are dissipated like the threatening smoke issuing from the mouth of Popocatepetl,* and what remains of all these pompous existences is reduced to the coarse skin on which the chronicler inscribes a few lines.

A strophe then follows, in which the royal law-giver and poet seems to be inspired at once by the thought that dictated to Juvenal the beautiful lines—

Expende Annibalem, quot libras in duce summo, &c.†

—and by the words the Christian priest addresses to each of the faithful on Ash-Wednesday, as he makes the sign of the cross on his forehead:—

* An elevated mountain, covered with snow, that looks down on the valley and city of Mexico. The name signifies "the smoking mountain."

† "Weigh Annibal; how many pounds in that great general," &c.

Alas! if I were to conduct you into the obscure recesses of these mansions of the dead, and should ask you for the bones of the mighty king who was the first chief of the ancient Toltecs, and for those of Necaxecmitl, the pious worshipper of the gods; if I were to summon you to point out to me which are the remains of the Empress Xiuhtzal, of incomparable beauty, and of the pacific Topietzin, the last sovereign of the ill-fated Toltec monarchy; if I asked you to show me which are the sacred ashes of our first father, Xolotl, those of the most magnificent Nopaltzin, and of the generous Tlotzin, and even those still warm of my father, glorious and immortal, notwithstanding his misfortunes; if the like questions were put to you as to all our illustrious ancestors—what could you reply, if it were not what I should reply myself—"*Indipohdi, indipohdi*—I know nought, I know nought!" for the earliest and the latest are mingled and confounded in the bosom of the earth. As it is with them so will it be one day with ourselves and with all that come after us.

It concludes with these consoling phrases:—

But let us, noble chiefs, and you, also, faithful friends and loyal subjects, stand full of courage and confidence. Let us aspire to Heaven, where all is eternal, and where everything defies corruption. The tomb with its horrors is the cradle of the sun, and the gloomy shades of death are dazzling lights for the starry spaces.*

* The obscurity of this passage must be attributed to its having a mystic sense connected with the ideas of the Mexicans as to the future life. They placed their paradises in the stations of the sun.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOUBLE CURRENT OF ANCIENT MEXICAN CIVILIZATION—THE TOLTECS AND AZTECS.

BEFORE proceeding further, let us point out an important fact. The history of ancient Mexico is composed of two distinct, or rather, decisively separated periods. In the first, the country belongs to the Toltecs; in the second, to the Aztecs, mingling up with them the races of the same origin whom they finally mastered. It is needless to dwell here on an intermediate epoch, neither strongly characterized nor of more than short duration, that of the Chichemecs. These last were soon driven back either towards the north or into the mountains of Tlascala, where they remained, face to face with their more powerful and soon more civilized neighbours, in a state of rivalry which Cortez had the skill to turn to the advantage of his arms. The Toltec period dates from the year 698 of the

Christian era, and ends with the twelfth century. That of the Aztecs begins about A.D. 1200, and was put an end to by the conquest of Cortez—if indeed we can say, in rigorous strictness, that it has been put an end to, since the Aztecs, pure or mixed, still form the mass of the Mexican population.

With the Toltecs civilization appeared. From whence did they come? Of that we are in ignorance; all that is known is, that they came by a northern route from a mysterious locality designated by the name of Tullan. We have no positive data as to the medium through which they gained the arts and knowledge they brought with them. They established the seat of their dominion to the north of the valley of Mexico, at Tula, where the companions of Cortez found vestiges of vast buildings. They were a kind-hearted race, but not in the passive style of the Indians of the small or large islands discovered by Christopher Columbus. They were endowed, on the contrary, with great activity, and a remarkable spirit of enterprise. They it was who brought the country under cultivation by introducing maize and cotton; they were the first who built cities, constructed roads, and erected monuments. They distinguished themselves greatly

in architecture. They made use of hieroglyphic painting to record events, and communicate ideas and feelings. Among other useful arts they knew how to cast metals, to cut and polish the hardest stones, to burn pottery, and to weave various stuffs. They were fond of literature and of the achievements of the mind in general. Thus, they had a solar year more perfect than that of the Greeks and Romans, and the Spaniards found it in use in the Aztec empire.

The major part of the knowledge the Spaniards discovered in the country appears to have come from the Toltecs. They had a religion whose precepts were humane, and the practices of which often recommend themselves by the graceful imagination that outlined their programme. A man of superior mind, who observed political and social facts with the same sagacity and the same profundity as he did the phenomena of nature—Von Humboldt—says that the form of the Toltec Government and their organization led to the idea that they sprang from a people who had already endured great vicissitudes in their social state. The little preserved of their literature tends to confirm this deduction.

Of the evidences of their sway left by the

Toltecs in Anahuac, the most prominent consists of a number of pyramids, which have a good deal of resemblance to those of Sakara in Upper Egypt. They are like them built of clay, or of bricks burnt in the sun, with a facing of stone, and parted off into stories by terraces. Like all the pyramids of Egypt, including the three famous monuments of the plain of Gizeh at the gates of Cairo, their four faces are set with exactness to the four cardinal points.

They are considerable pieces of building, though, after all, having slight pretensions to art. The principal of the pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacan, that dedicated to the sun, has at this day a height of 180 feet, with a length of base of 682 feet. The pyramid of Cheops, at Gizeh, is 478 feet high, and 767 feet at the base. The Toltecs were still more incontestably the architects of the pyramid of Cholula, which was destined to support the sanctuary of Quetzalcoalt, the God of the Air, on the summit of which at this day is reared a chapel, girt round with trees, and served by an Indian monk. The pyramid of Cholula is exactly the same height as that of the sun at San Juan Teotihuacan, but the length of its base is almost double that of even the pyramid of Cheops, being exactly 1423

feet. Its shape is the same as those of San Juan Teotihuacan and Sakara, and it is set to the points of the compass, and parted off into stories by successive terraces, passing round the entire circumference.*

How and why did the Toltec empire come to an end? By emigration, we are told. But why did the people emigrate? Under what pressure, or in virtue of what instinct, did they quit so fine a country? No one has yet been able to tell this with any certainty. Was it famine? Was it pestilence?—for pestilence has at times desolated these regions, and what part of the world has it spared? Was it an unsuc-

* The number of these pyramids appears to be rather considerable in Mexico. A traveller who examined the country four-and-twenty years ago—M. Isidore Löwenstern—whom a premature death snatched from science and his friends, had the satisfaction of discovering some that had not been mentioned before. The most interesting was the one he found quite close to the capital, at a league from Tacuba, a village of Remedios. He estimated the height at from 260 to 325 feet. He says:—"It is distinguished from the monuments of Mexico hitherto known by its being divided over its whole surface by steps, each about a yard high, while the others are ordinarily divided into three or four stories or terraces. This appears to have had a complete facing of stone-work. It is very difficult to climb, both by reason of the loosened stones and the prickly nopal that covers it."—"Le Mexique," by J. Löwenstern, p. 262.

cessful war with ferocious neighbours? Nothing is known on the point. However, it is considered as probable that on abandoning Anahuac they moved southwards, and that the grand edifices, the remains of which the traveller contemplates with astonishment at Palenque, Uxmal, and Mitla, in Central America, were the work of their hands.*

Quite otherwise was the genius of the Aztecs. They were sombre, and severe to cruelty. As soon as they could display them, they exhibited sanguinary tastes. They had a spirit of domination and conquest. They organized a rigid authority over vast territories. Between them and the Toltecs the difference is of the same kind as between the rude Romans of the early days of the republic and the Greeks of the epoch that preceded Pericles. The Aztecs did not

* Mexico has more than once suffered from an epidemic disease called *matlazahuatl*, which has displayed its ravages since the arrival of the Spaniards, as well as before. It is remarkable that it now attacks almost solely the Red or primitive population. It does not spare the interior of the country and the central table-land any more than the low and hot districts. The number of victims it has at times made is very considerable. One of the most plausible explanations of the migration that carried the Toltecs from Mexico would be that an outbreak of this scourge brought them to determine on flight.

totally destroy the institutions founded by the Toltecs, but they modified them, imprinting on them their own stamp; and they placed them in juxtaposition with others more in conformity to their own temper. Thence the strange and shocking anomalies in Mexican civilization, as it presented itself to Cortez, that would be declared incredible were it not that, in the matter of contradictions, the mind and heart of man are capable of anything. An indescribable mixture of gentleness and barbarity; mercy coupled with hideous and terrible customs; to sum up, in one word, human sacrifices and cannibal feasts associated with the culture of flowers and ceremonies replete with nobleness and elegance: such was the spectacle that Mexico presented to the astonished gaze of the Spaniards.

CHAPTER V.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF ANCIENT MEXICO.

THE Mexican empire had been for some time, and was still, when the Spaniards arrived, a federation of three kingdoms, formed, to a certain point, of the domains of the three tribes of one family, that of the Nahuatlecs :—There was the kingdom of the Aztecs, the capital of which, as before stated, was Tenochtitlan (Mexico); that of the Acolhuans, or Tezcucans, whose king resided at Tezcuco, on the other side of the lake; and lastly, the small kingdom of Tlacopan (Tacuba). Originally, these three states were of equal rank, and the primacy, if any, was with Tezcuco, as distinguished for its intellectual and moral culture. United, they did not, in their primitive state, occupy more than the valley of Mexico, the circumference of which is not greater than from two hundred to

two hundred and fifty miles. The internal organization of the three was almost identical, as was natural to nations of the same stock, speaking dialects of the same language. By degrees they extended their sway to a distance, and incorporated to themselves divers other peoples. The one whose acquisitions were the largest was the Aztec empire, consisting of a race more active, more resolute, fiercer, and of superior energy. At the arrival of the Spaniards, the Mexican emperor exercised an uncontested supremacy over the two princes his confederates. He consulted them at all times when circumstances of gravity presented themselves; but in reality they were no more than the first of his vassals.

The political organization was, with some restrictions, military and theocratic. It seems that such may be a phase imposed on great societies even in our days. It differed, however, from those of India and ancient Egypt, in that the nation was not partitioned off into castes, whose barriers it was impossible to overleap. Children ordinarily adopted the profession of their parents; but that happens commonly in every settled society. There was a nobility of more than one grade, possessing some immu-

nities; but what in European style would be called the offices of the State, were not hereditary: the emperor delegated them to those who were recommended by their exploits. In the imperial family itself, when the children of the deceased sovereign were too young, the brother of the defunct monarch was preferred to them. A noble committed nothing derogatory in applying himself to industry. "Give yourself," said a noble father to his son, "to the labour of the fields, or to feather-working; choose, in short, an honourable profession; so did thy ancestors before thee: how otherwise could they have provided for their own existence and that of their family? I have nowhere seen that nobility is a sufficiency for a man." Such notions suggest that the demarcation between the privileged and the commonalty was not very wide. Thus it was that any man who distinguished himself in war was ennobled. "It was the custom," states one of the actors in the conquest, "to recompense and pay very generously those warriors who signalized themselves by a brilliant exploit. Though he might be the lowest of the slaves, they made him a captain, ennobled him, gave him vassals, and he enjoyed such great esteem that wherever he presented himself he was

respected and honoured like a real grandee."* At one of the last rencontres during the siege of Mexico, the leader of the Spaniards having required that some nobles should be sent to parley with him—"We are all nobles," replied the Aztecs.

The Aztec sovereigns instituted distinctions similar to orders of knighthood, with their special insignia and peculiar privileges. It would even appear that there existed an inferior grade, which it was necessary to have acquired to possess the right of using ornaments for the person. Until then a man was compelled to wear a coarser cloth, made from the fibre of the aloe. The members of the imperial family themselves were in this matter subject to the common law. So also in the chivalry of the Middle Ages, no man had the right to a banner, and to bear a device on his shield—in a word, to knighthood —till he had signalized himself by some feat of arms. The military orders of the Aztecs were accessible to all without distinction of birth. The emperors themselves were members of some only on certain conditions. Similar institutions existed among their neighbours.

* "Relation d'un gentilhomme de la suite de Cortez." Ternaux Collection, p. 55 of the volume entitled "Pièces relatives à la Conquête du Mexique."

Traces of a chivalrous spirit, in the European sense of the phrase, are met with in several of their usages. Thus, during the obstinate wars between the Aztecs and the people of Tlascala, the nobles of the former passed in to the Tlascalan grandees cotton, salt, and cocoa, all articles which the country of the latter did not furnish, and which, once at war, they could not procure from without, as their territory was shut in between the provinces of the empire. These convoys were accompanied with courteous messages. Nothing, however, resulted from this derogatory to honour; after these passages of civility they cut each other's throats on the field of battle with all the bravery in the world.

The men of letters, to use a Chinese expression, were held in great consideration. We have already seen how the sovereigns mingled with them on a footing of equality in the societies similar to our Academies.

Commerce, properly so called, was a profession particularly honoured. Merchants went in caravans of large bodies, well armed; they rendered to the state services of more than one kind, by the information they brought back, no less than by the wealth produced by their barter. The princes treated them with distinction. The

credit enjoyed by this profession, and by the men of letters, and the rank bestowed on them, would give a favourable idea of the progress of these peoples. In primitive societies, all importance devolves unshared on the warrior and the priest. Unfortunately, we shall have to mention other traits from which may be drawn a conclusion less advantageous to Aztec civilization. There was at bottom a great inequality between the different classes of the population; at the top were powerful grandees, great beings, as grand as the barons of Europe in the feudal epoch. At the bottom of the scale was a miserable multitude, and beggars in such numbers as to strike Cortez, and he remarks on it in one of his letters to Charles V. It is worthy of attention, that this inequality has perpetuated itself in Mexico under the Spanish sway more than in any of the other countries colonized by Spain in the New World.

Thus, after the conquest, when the colony was thoroughly constituted, and had subsisted two or nearly three centuries, the mines and the cultivation of a fertile soil, partitioned into vast domains, had created in the provinces of New Spain immense fortunes, the proprietors of which the court of Madrid sought to attach to itself by

Castillian titles. Those intelligent or fortunate miners who had amassed treasures, as the Tereros, the Obregons, and the Fagoagas, and those possessors of immense estates where sugar and cochineal were cultivated, were blazoned and transformed into counts or marquises, and lived in the midst of sumptuous opulence. At the same time, in the lower story of society, there might be observed, in the cities especially, and in Mexico above all, a coarse and ignorant mob, scarcely clothed, and wallowing in drunkenness. The presence of this degraded multitude, of these *leperos* as they are still called, who swarm in the low quarters of Mexico, and deal out thrusts of the knife in the liquor-shops on the Sunday, is more calculated to provoke recriminations against the social order now existing than against the organization of society among the Aztecs. This debasement of a portion of the population was an evil almost inevitable among the ancient Mexicans, infinitely more so than in our days. Their civilization pressed fatally on the greater number with a crushing weight, to the degree of plunging a part into degradation. Man had there to do the office of beasts of burden, which they were without. All heavy work, and all transport, was done by the effort of

his muscles or the strength of his back, for there were but few roads, and none fit for conveyances; the cart was unknown, just as it is to this day all those regions of Asia and Africa where Europeans have not established their empire.

The morale of our species does not hold up under this brutalizing *régime*. It needs a higher level; it loses intelligence and feeling under such a load of physical fatigue. The ancients said, that when a man fell into slavery Jupiter withdrew from him the half of his soul. In that they uttered not merely an odious prejudice against the slave: there was a great mixture of truth in the desponding maxim, for the hard toil to which the slave was in most cases condemned annihilated his spirit, and withdrew from him, to a certain degree, that breath of life which emanated from the Godhead.

The difficulty resulting to a society from being deprived of such useful auxiliaries as are presented, when once tamed, by the larger quadrupeds, from their muscular strength, for the transport of provisions, stone, wood, and whatever is heavy and cumbersome, was successfully met by the Mexicans, as regarded the capital, by means of the situation they chose on the

shore, or rather in the midst, of a lake. Tenochtitlan was surrounded by water on all sides, which is not true of the modern city, though it occupies the same spot. Formerly, in the Aztec days, the city completely resembled Venice: the waters that bathed it at all parts penetrated into most of the streets in the form of canals. It was easy then to effect all the transport required by canoes, that could be made by a gentle effort to glide along the liquid element.

The same reason may explain why the population accumulated so much about the lake of Tezcuco which environed Mexico, and round the other lakes that communicated with it.

Slavery was in existence among the Mexicans, but it was entirely personal, and was not transmitted by birth. It was a maxim with them that man was born free. He who was in servitude preserved two civil rights that are looked on, not without reason, as incompatible with slavery justly so called—property and family. Individuals were reduced to that condition either by the sentence of the tribunals for criminal offences, for debts to the state, or by offering themselves for sale. Parents had the right of thus trafficking with their children. The laws

protected the slave, and stipulated his rights; the master treated the slave as a member of his family, as we see done in the East. It rarely happened that he sold him, unless for a fault that excited his antipathy, or for a determined propensity to disobedience. Prisoners of war were thrown into slavery, unless they were turned to a much worse use, of which we shall have to speak further on.

The laws protected property; they were regularly promulgated, and there were tribunals charged to apply them. There were three jurisdictions among the Aztecs, the lower rank being elective, while the highest was reduced to a single judge for each division of territory, who was nominated by the prince. This magistrate was not removable, and his decisions were without appeal, even to the sovereign. For civil affairs, however, there were but two grades of jurisdiction. The judicial organization was different in the kingdom of Tezcuco, but at least as conformable to the principles of reason and equity. Condemnations to capital punishment were there accompanied with peculiar solemnity.

The penal law was everywhere of extreme severity: the punishment of death is met with

incessantly; death for murder, for adultery, for certain specified thefts; death to the cultivator who removed the landmarks of fields; death even for the young man of rank who gave himself up to drunkenness, or who dissipated his patrimony. In comparison with the good King Nezahuacoyotl, author of a code that from the kingdom of Tezcuco passed to the neighbouring princes, the terrible Draco is a legislator full of human kindness. The sanguinary character of the penal law attests that Mexican civilization was far from having completely shaken off the trappings of barbarism. This may be attributed, however, to the peculiar sombreness there was in the genius of the Aztecs, and of the other tribes that settled round the lakes at the same time as they. It is not the only side on which, as we shall see farther on, their civilization exhibited stains and streams of blood.

The administration had to provide for a large number of the public wants. The business of the revenue was discharged with exactitude and rigour. Taxes were paid in commodities or produce; vast granaries and immense storehouses were set aside for their reception. Woe to the contributor who did not pay; the inexorable collector had him sold as a defaulter to the

treasury. The taxes were originally moderate, but under the later emperors, and particularly under the second Montezuma,* the one who encountered Cortez, they became very burdensome; because the princes had, by their pomp, created artificial and ruinous necessities, and because, to maintain obedience in the provinces they had conquered, they were compelled to keep up large armies.

As is always the case in states that feel themselves on the growth, and have a taste for conquest, the army was the object of the sovereign's lively solicitude; and so, under the last Montezuma, the Aztec empire was endowed with an institution like the one reckoned among the titles to fame of Louis XIV.: it had an Hotel des Invalides.

For the purposes of their aggrandizement, the Aztec emperors practised usages that seem to be the accompaniments of a refined and already corrupt civilization. We are told, indeed, in the narrative of the conquest, that Montezuma, further resembling Louis XIV., had in his pay some of the privy councillors of the sovereigns his allies; he so succeeded in laying a snare for Cacamatzin,

* The first left glorious reminiscences.

the occupant of the Tezcucan throne, and caused him to fall into the hands of Cortez.

The form of the government was that of an absolute monarchy, tempered, however, in various modes, and mainly by the privileges and power of the aristocracy. There were great vassals, whom the prince had to keep on good terms with. He retained them about his person a part of the year in the capital, where they led a sumptuous existence, surrounded by their followers. There were also the chiefs of conquered countries, whose assimilation was a long way from perfect, not having received the sanction of time; yet the Aztec monarchs had, by adroitness and terror, succeeded in making fidelity to their person a sort of dogma, which was observed at the period of the conquest almost as a result of the long incorporation of the provinces, and of their proximity to Mexico. The prince concentrated the legislative power in his person; but there is reason to believe that each of the great caciques preserved it in his own domains within certain limits.

In the second place, the people had a guarantee against absolutism in the irremovability of the superior judges. This peculiarity is an institution of an advanced order, and is of a nature to

embarrass those who refuse to admit that the ancient Mexicans had made great steps in the path of civilization, or that they had received some of the traditions of other peoples who had passed through a long career.

Lastly, whatever respect and pomp might environ the person of the prince, it does not appear that the subject lived in such obsequiousness as to create a general debasement of character. It was a submissiveness that did not shut out dignity. With the Mexican, the sentiment of duty towards the sovereign seemed to accord, up to a certain point, with that of the rights of the individual. We find a proof of this in the mode, preserved by Judge Zurita,* in which the inferior chiefs addressed the emperor, and their wives the empress. Here is a paragraph that gives a sample of the rest:—"God (said they to the sovereign) has done you a great favour in putting you in his place. Honour him; serve him; take courage; doubt not. The powerful master who has given you a charge so weighty will aid you, and confer on you the crown of honour, if you do not suffer yourself to be vanquished by the wicked."

* Ternaux Collection, pages 22 and following of the volume devoted to that magistrate.

The address of the High Priest to the emperor, at the time of what may be called his coronation, was almost of the same character. There were also ceremonies intended to engrave on the souls of these mighty ones of the earth their sacred duties towards the masses:—"The new dignitary (the future sovereign, elevated to the rank of *tecle*) was conducted to a part of the temple, where he remained to do penance sometimes one or two years. He was seated on the earth during the day; at evening they gave him nothing but a mat to sleep on. At fixed hours of the night he went into the temple to burn incense, and the first four days he slept but a few hours out of the twenty-four. Near him were guards, who when he became drowsy pricked his legs and arms with the thorns of the *metl*, or *maguay*, which are like pins, saying, '*Awake thee; thou must not sleep, but watch and take care of thy vassals. Thou enterest not on this charge to have repose; slumber must fly thine eyes, which must remain open, and watch over the people.*' "

Those so inclined might even discover, in the forms of accession to power, indices of the exercise of the sovereignty of the people:—" The heir presumptive was previously decorated with

the title of *tecuitli* (or *tecle*), the most honourable they had. After several religious ceremonies, some of the people addressed him in abusive terms, and even showered blows on him to prove his patience. Such was the resignation of the princes submitted to this trial, that they uttered not a word, and did not even turn the head to see who were maltreating them."*

The political and social organization of the Aztecs was such that Cortez thus sums up to Charles V. his opinion of it:—"For the obedience they show to their sovereign, and in their manner of life, these Indians are almost like Spaniards; and there is nearly as much order as in Spain. If we consider that this people is barbarous, destitute of the knowledge of God, of all connexion with other nations, and of

* This and the preceding passage are extracts from the Memoir of Zurita, pp. 24 and 25. The first quotation refers to the sons and successors of the chiefs of Tlascala, whose government was an oligarchy recognising four chiefs. The second relates not only to Tlascala, but to Cholollan, which was a great fief dependent on the Aztec monarchy, and to Huetzocingo, which remained almost to the last independent of the Mexican emperors. But there was the same race of men everywhere, and, with a few shades of difference, the same spirit and same manners.

reason,* we cannot behold without astonishment how wisely everything is administered."

* The phrase "destitute of reason" here signifies, as does the word "barbarous," ignorance of Christianity. That appears from the very letters of Cortez, in which it is elsewhere said that the Indians are remarkable for their reason.

CHAPTER VI.

MANNERS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES.

MANNERS were not dissolute. With the exception of the chiefs, who possessed several concubines, each man had but one wife; and further, the concubines of the princes were recognised by law, and had certain privileges that raised their condition. "Whosoever looks at a woman too eagerly," they were taught, "commits adultery with his eyes." These are identically the words of Christ, as reported by St. Matthew. Marriage was surrounded with protecting formalities, and was celebrated with solemnity. Divorce was not permitted but in certain determined cases, and by means of a tribunal instituted specially to solve the questions that marriage might give rise to. Adultery was punished with death; and the life of King Nezahualpilli presents three remarkable examples of the application of the penalty—one to the queen herself, the consort of that prince, who was also no less than the

daughter of the Aztec emperor. The princess and her accomplices were tried and executed with all the severities of the code, notwithstanding their elevated rank. The second is that of a noble lady, who yielded herself to him without revealing that she was the property of a husband. The third is that of his own son, who entered into a correspondence in verse with one of the royal concubines—a case provided for by the penal law. The tribunals passed sentence, and the father suffered it to be executed; but he then shut himself up in his palace for several weeks, a prey to grief, refusing to see any one.

The social position of women resembled much more what we see in Europe than the usages of Asia. They were not secluded in a harem as among the Mahometans; their feet were not distorted as in China. They kept their faces uncovered, were admitted to fêtes, and took their places at banquets. We have a province in France, in the nineteenth century, where, among the peasantry, the woman takes no part in festive meetings, and mingles in them only to wait with humility on the lords of the creation. The Mexican women were exempted as much as possible from laborious work, which the men reserved to themselves, with a delicacy

that it would be even now well to inculcate over the surface of Western Europe, and which, among civilized people, the English and the Anglo-Saxons of the New World alone know how to practise. Things were certainly not in Mexico at that height in this point that they are in modern England, but the intention was there. There are few signs by which advanced civilization can be so surely recognised. Among savages the woman is a beast of burden. There is not in the world a worse lot than that of the *squaws* of the North American tribes in those regions that belong to the United States. In our Pyrenees we may see women climbing the steepest slopes with a load of manure, or descending from the highest plateau with a burden of hay or sheaves of grain. The strangers who come in the summer to seek in those charming villages pure air, a beautiful sky, bewitching landscapes, and hot springs of great virtue, have thus ground for carrying away an opinion little favourable to our pretension of being the most attentive and most obsequious people in the world towards females. An unerring gauge for the position created for the sex by Mexican civilization is that they participated in the functions of the priesthood. There were Mexican

priestesses as well as priests, and a sort of symmetry between the attributes of the one and the other; but sacrifice, and we shall see directly in what that consisted, was reserved for the priests, and even for the dignitaries among them. The purity of the Mexican priestesses has been certified by the Spanish missionaries; the majority of whom, however, have not anathemas enough for the Aztec religion, in which they at every instant detect the craft of the Evil One and the mark of the cloven foot.

An intimate acquaintance with any civilization is obtained by examining the rules of conduct, the recognised proprieties, the forms of decency and civility—what, in short, directs the individual in the habitual acts of his life. Now we possess the means for appreciating Mexican society under this head. Examples of the instructions of a father to his son, and of a mother to her daughter, have been fortunately preserved in each of these classes, and Zurita has reproduced them.* I shall here quote at length the advice of parents of the middle class, or—to

* Pages 132 and following of Zurita's Memoir, in the Ternaux collection. We reproduce the very text of M. Ternaux. Prescott has confined himself to quoting the advice of one of the mothers, that of the middle class.

employ the expression of Zurita himself—of the inhabitants of towns, of tradesmen and artizans. It is at once a collection of moral precepts, and an abridged code of what is called, in familiar language, *polite manners for young people.*

A FATHER'S COUNSEL TO HIS SON.

O my beloved son, created by the will of God,* under the eyes of thy father and mother, and of thy relatives, like a chicken that leaves its shell and essays to fly, thou makest thy essay with difficulty. We know not till what time God will permit us to enjoy thee. Supplicate Him, my son, to protect thee, for He created thee; He is thy father; He loves thee better than I. Address to Him thy wishes night and day; let Him be the object of thy thoughts; serve Him with love; He will be merciful to thee, and will deliver thee from all danger. Respect the image of God, and whatever is connected with Him. Pray to Him devotedly; observe the religious festivals. He who offends God will die miserable, and it will be his own fault.

* The words "God," "Lord," have been substituted by the monks who collected these poems after the conquest for those of the various divinities of the Aztec Olympus, just as "demon" replaces the indication of some evil spirit of the Mexican mythology; but there is reason to believe that is the only change the monks made in these pieces. They have expressly said so, and they collated different translations made by the lettered Indians of various cities.

Honour and salute old men. Console the poor and afflicted by thy words and thy good works.

Revere, love, and serve thy father and mother; obey them, for the son who does not so conduct himself will repent it.

Love and honour all the world, and thou wilt live in peace.

Imitate not the fools who respect neither father nor mother, and who, like the animals, listen to the counsel of no one.

Be careful, my son, not to mock the old, the infirm, the maimed, or the sinner. Be not haughty towards them; do not hate them, but humble thyself before the Lord, and tremble lest you be as unfortunate as they.

Poison no one, for thou wilt wound God in his creature; thy crime will be discovered, thou wilt suffer the punishment of it, and thou wilt die the same death.

Be upright, polite, and cause pain to no one.

Meddle not with affairs in which thou art not concerned, from the fear of displeasing and of being counted indiscreet.

Injure no one. Eschew adultery and luxury: it is a base vice, which causes the ruin of him who gives himself up to it, and offends God.

Set not bad examples.

Be modest in thy discourse; interrupt not people who are speaking; disturb them not; if they express themselves badly, if they make mistakes, content thyself with not imitating them. Keep silence when it is not thy turn to speak; and if a question is put to thee, reply with openness, without heat or falsehood. Interfere not with the interests of others, and men will pay

respect to thy words. If thou keepest clear, my son, of carrying tales, of repeating jests, thou wilt keep clear of lying and of sowing discord, which is a source of confusion to him who does it.

Be not a lounger on the pavement, haunt not the streets, lose not thy time in the markets or the baths, lest the demon tempt thee and make thee his victim.

Be not affected or too studied in thy dress, for it is the mark of a little mind.

In whatever place thou mayest be, let thy looks be modest; make no grimaces; indulge not in indecent gestures: thou wilt pass for a libertine, and such things are snares of the demon. Seize no one by the hand or the clothes, for it is the mark of an indiscreet mind. Pay attention, when thou walkest, not to stop the way of any one soever.

If thou art begged to undertake a matter, and it be to tempt thee, civilly excuse thyself, though thou mightest get some advantage from it, and thou wilt be held a wise and prudent man.

Enter not nor go out before thy superiors; be careful not to take precedence of them; always leave them the place of honour, and seek not to lift thyself above any one, unless thou art raised in rank, for thou wilt be looked upon as a rude fellow. Be modest; humility merits the favour of God and the great.

Be not in a hurry in eating or drinking; and if thou art at table, offer to him who may present himself before thee, wanting to take part in thy repast; thou shalt be recompensep for it. If thou eatest in company, let it be without eagerness or gluttony; thou wilt pass for a greedy fellow. Take thy repasts with thy head bent

down, and so as not to finish before the others, for fear of offending them.

If a present be made thee, however small it may be disdain it not, and think not thou deservest more, for thou wilt not gain thereby before God or man.

Trust thyself entirely to the Lord; 'tis from Him that good will come to thee, and thou knowest not when thou mayest die.

I take on myself to procure thee what is proper for thee; bear and wait patiently. If thou wishest to marry, tell me; and since thou art our child, undertake not to do it before speaking to us on the matter.

Be neither gambler nor thief, for one of those faults is the occasion of the other, and it is disgraceful. If thou keepest clear of them, thou wilt not be evil spoken of in the public squares and markets.

Take always the good part, O my son. Sow, and thou shalt reap; thou wilt live by thy labour, and consequently thou wilt be satisfied, and cherished of thy parents.

We live not in this world without much labour; we procure not easily what is necessary. I have had much trouble to rear thee, and yet I have never abandoned thee, and I have done nothing for which thou canst blush.

If thou desirest to live in tranquillity, keep clear of evil-speaking, for evil-speaking occasions quarrels.

Keep secret what thou hearest. Let it be learnt from others rather than from thee; and if thou canst not avoid telling it, speak frankly, without hiding anything, even though thou believest it were well to do so.

Repeat not that of which thou hast been the witness.

Be discreet, for to be a tattler is a mean vice, and if thou liest thou will certainly be punished. Keep silence; nothing is gained by talking.

If thou art sent with a message to some one that receives thee roughly, and speaks ill of him who sent thee, report not the reply given in bad temper, and let not what has been done to thee be known. If thou art asked how thou wast received, reply calmly, in mild words; conceal the ill words that were said to thee, for fear of irritating both parties, that there may be neither bloodshed nor loss of life, and that thou mayest not later have to say in sadness, "Ah, if I had never said it!" But it will be too late, and thou wilt pass for a mischief-maker, and be without excuse.

Have no relations with the wife of another; live chastely, for we exist not twice in this world. Life is short and difficult, and everything has an end.

Offend no person, nor attack his honour. Make thyself worthy of the rewards God giveth to everyone as it pleases Him; receive what He shall give thee; return thanks, and if it be much, be not puffed up. Humble thyself, thy merit will be the greater, and others will have no occasion to murmur; but, on the contrary, if thou attributest to thyself what does not belong to thee, thou wilt meet with affronts and wilt offend God.

When thou art spoken to, keep thy hands and thy feet still, look not to the left or right; avoid rising, or sitting down if thou art standing; thou wilt pass for a giddy-pate or a clown.

If thou art in the service of any one, take care with zeal to render thyself useful, and to be agreeable to him; thou wilt not want necessaries, and thou wilt be

everywhere well treated; if thou dost the contrary, thou wilt not be able to remain with any one.

My son, if thou refusest to hearken to the counsels of thy father, thou wilt come to a bad end, and it will be thy own fault.

Be not proud of what God has given thee, and despise not others; thou wilt offend the Lord, who has placed thee in an honourable position.

If thou art what thou shouldst be, thou wilt be quoted to others as a model, when it is wished they should correct themselves.

These, O my son, are the counsels given thee by a father who loves thee; observe them, and it will be well with thee.

A MOTHER'S COUNSEL TO HER DAUGHTER.

My daughter, I brought thee into the world, I have nourished and reared thee as thou shouldst be, the honour of thy father has reflected on thee. If thou dost not thy duty, thou wilt not be admitted to live with virtuous women, and no man will desire to make thee his wife.

There is no living in this world without a great deal of pain and labour; our strength exhausts itself; we must therefore serve God, that He may aid us, sustain us, and grant us health. We must be active and careful, that we may obtain what is necessary.

My beloved daughter, shun idleness and negligence; be neat and industrious; take pains with thine apartment, let order reign there, that everything may be in its place; thus thou wilt learn to do thy duty when thou art married.

Wherever thou mayest be, respect modesty. Walk not too fast, neither laughing nor looking hither and thither at the men that pass near thee; look only to thy path: thus thou wilt gain the reputation of an honest woman.

Take care to be polite, and to speak properly; and when a question is asked thee, let thy answer be short and clear.

Take care of thine household, make cloth, work; thou wilt be loved, thou wilt deserve to have necessaries to feed and clothe thee, thou wilt be happy, and thou wilt thank God for having given thee the needful talent.

Give not thyself to slumber or sloth; love not to linger in bed, or in the shade, or in the open air, for thou wilt become heedless and libertine, and thou wilt be incapacitated for living in honour and propriety. Women who yield themselves to libertinism are neither sought after nor loved.

Be thou sitting or standing, walking or working, let thy thoughts and actions, my daughter, be always praiseworthy. Fulfil thy duty, so as to obey God and thy parents.

Allow not thyself to be called twice; come forthwith to see what is wanted, so that there may not be the grief of punishing thine idleness and disobedience.

Listen attentively to the orders given thee, and answer not amiss. If thou canst not do what is ordered of thee consistently with honour, excuse thyself civilly; but lie not and deceive no one, for God seeth thee.

If thou hearest another called, and she comes not directly, hasten and see what is wanted; do that which it was wished she should do, and thou wilt be loved.

If good advice be given thee, profit by it; do not despise it, for fear of being disesteemed.

Let thy gait be neither too hurried nor immodest; thou wilt pass for a light woman.

Be charitable; have hatred and contempt for no one; shun avarice, take nothing in bad part, and be not jealous of the good God granteth to others.

Do no wrong to another, for fear it be done unto thee; avoid evil; follow not the likings of thy heart; thou mayest be deceived and fall into vice, and thou wilt bring disgrace on thyself and on thy parents.

Shun the society of liars, idlers, gossips, and women of bad manners; they will ruin thee.

Busy thyself with thy household; go not abroad to divert thyself; lose not thy time in the market, in the squares and public baths. It is exceedingly evil, and thus females are lost and ruined, and become vicious, for so bad thoughts are nourished.

When a man seeks to address his speech to thee, hearken not to him, look not at him; keep silence, and pay no attention to him; if he follow thee, answer him not, lest thy words do but increase his passion. If thou pay no attention to him he will cease to follow thee.

Enter not other's houses, so as to avoid being the subject of their idle talk.

If thou go to see thy parents, pay them thy respects; be not idle, take part in the work that is going on, if thou be able, and remain not to look at those who are working.

If thy parents choose thee a husband, thou must love him, listen to him, obey him, do with pleasure what he tells thee; turn not away the head when he speaks to

thee; and if he says to thee anything disagreeable, endeavour to get over thy vexation. If he live on thy property, despise him not for that. Be neither sullen nor uncivil, for thou wilt offend God, and thy husband will be irritated against thee; tell him quietly what thou thinkest the proper course. Address him not in offensive terms before others, nor even when alone, for it is thou that wilt bear the shame and contempt.

If anyone come to pay a visit to thy husband, receive him well and show him friendship.

Should thy husband not conduct himself properly, give him advice as to his manner of behaviour, and bid him take care of his household.

Be attentive to the labour on thy land; take care of the crop, and neglect nothing.

Be not prodigal of thy property, aid thy husband in his labour; by so doing thou wilt not want necessaries, and thou wilt provide for the education of thy children.

My daughter, if thou follow my advice, thou wilt be loved and esteemed of all. In giving it to thee, I fulfil my duty as a mother; in following it thou wilt live happy. If it be otherwise, it will be thy fault; thou wilt see hereafter what will happen to thee from not having hearkened to me, and no one will be able to say that I have neglected to give thee counsels that, as a mother, I ought to have done.

This address of a father to his son, and of a mother to her daughter, are not literary *chefs-d'œuvre;* as just laid before the reader, they present prolixities, repetitions, and common-places, a portion of which, however, may be

imputed to the various translators through whose hands the text has passed. But, as a whole, they contain not a word that, in the civilization of this nineteenth century, parents would not think apropos to say to their children; and, a circumstance still more remarkable, what there would be to add is reduced to very little.

CHAPTER VII.

MEXICAN CREEDS AND PRAYERS.

THE Mexicans believed in a supreme God, the creator and master of the universe. In their prayers they addressed him as "God by whom we live, who is everywhere, knows all things, dispenses every good;" or, as "the invisible incorporeal God, perfect perfection and purity, under whose wings are found repose and inviolable shelter." Under this supreme Being were placed thirteen great divinities, and more than two hundred inferior ones, each having his consecrated day, and all receiving certain honours. The Aztecs paid special adoration to Huitzilopochtli, the God of War, whose image they had carried before them, during their long pilgrimage from Aztlan to Tenochtitlan, as the Hebrews did the Ark of the Lord. This terrible god was also called Mexitli; and it is probable that from thence came the name of

Mexico. The principal temple in Tenochtitlan, which with its appurtenances formed an immense edifice, belonged to this god.*

Among the divinities of the Mexican Olympus another was the God of the Air, Quetzatcoatl, whose name often occurs in the history of the conquest. He had resided on the earth, had taught men the art of cultivation, and the working of metals, the still more difficult one of governing, and, said the tradition, "he stopped his ears when he was talked to of war." According to the Mexican mythology, he caused men to taste of delights to be compared with those of the Golden Age of Greek mythology. Under him the earth was covered with fruit and flowers without cultivation. An ear of maize was a load for a man, as was the case with the grapes of the vine found by the Jews in Canaan, after forty years' privation in the Desert. Cotton grew on the tree tinged with the richest colours; the air was filled with delicious perfumes, and birds of brilliant plumage incessantly poured forth a tender melody. However this

* It is to be remarked that Cortez, who greatly disfigures the names of men and cities, says *Temixtitan*, instead of *Tenochtitlan*. It is not impossible that the name of Mexico may have sprung out of this erroneous designation.

god, such a father to men, incurred the enmity of a more powerful divinity, and was obliged to quit the country. On his departure, he stopped at the city of Chololan, where afterwards a temple was raised to him, the base of which was a grand pyramid. It has been already mentioned, and is still in existence. Arrived on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, he took leave of the faithful who had previously accompanied him, promising them that his descendants or himself would one day reappear; then throwing himself into his little bark made of serpents' skins, he sailed towards the mysterious country of Tlapallan, of which nothing is known save that it was to the east, beyond sea (that is, in the direction of Europe). Was the fable of Quetzalcoatl a tradition, in the marvellous form, of the sway of the Toltecs, who brought the arts and sciences into the country, and then disappeared? Or rather, was it not founded on the appearance at some point of the country of a European navigator, whom the great equatorial current, or the trade-winds, or a tempest, had borne to the shores of the Mexican Gulf?

Be that as it may, the reminiscence of the good days of Quetzalcoatl, and the hope of his return, were fixed in the public mind. He

was looked for as a Messiah. In traditions of a people's well-being we find, often decked out and gilt by the imagination, the recollection of a happy past, whose return is the object of vague hope, and even of lively faith. These populations of Redskins, with the beard short and thin, reminded their children that Quetzalcoatl was tall in stature, that he had a white skin, black hair, and a long beard. No other course could have been taken if it had been actually intended to predict the arrival of the Spaniards.

The tradition of Quetzalcoatl has a turn that recals the Greek Mythology. But the Mexicans had legends that resemble still more the fabulous narratives Greece has bequeathed to us and adorned so charmingly. In glancing over those that have been preserved, we often fancy we are reading Ovid's "Metamorphoses." I shall quote an extract from Boturini as an example:*—

A man named Yappan, desiring to merit the favour of the gods, quitted his wife and family, entered into the desert to lead there a chaste and contemplative life, and built himself a hut near an altar of stone, consecrated to penitence. But the gods, who doubted the sincerity of his conversion, charged Yaotl, his mortal enemy, to

* "Idea de Una Nueva Historia de la America Septentrional."

watch him continually, and to render them an account of all his actions. Yappan for a long time resisted the various beauties that were sent to tempt him, so that the gods began to praise his virtue, and to rally Tlazolteolt, the Goddess of Love, with the fact that Yappan would not submit to her like other men. The latter, piqued at their pleasantries, at last exclaimed—"Do you think, then, O potent deities, that Yappan will persevere to the end to merit the reward you confer on virtuous men? I will go down to the earth myself, to show you how frail is the virtue of man, and whether he can resist me."

The goddess approached the residence of Yappan, but as she found him seated on the altar of penitence, she soon perceived she would be powerless over him as long as he quitted not that post of protection. She therefore addressed him in a winning tone, with—"Friend Yappan, come to me. I am the goddess Tlazolteolt, and I bring thee the reward of thy virtue." Deceived by these words, poor Yappan hastened to meet her; but scarcely had he left the altar than a new fire poured through his veins, and he fell into the snare laid for him.

Yaotl, who had not ceased from afar to watch what was passing, was so indignant at this conduct, that he could not restrain himself from rushing forward, exclaiming—"Wretch! are you not ashamed to deceive the gods, and to profane their sanctuary thus?" So saying, he cut off his head with one blow of his sword. Yappan fell to the ground opening his arms, and the gods changed him into an ash-coloured scorpion, who always has his arms open. Yaotl, whose vengeance was

not yet satisfied, went to look for Tlahuitzin, the wife of his victim, and showing her the body of her husband, said to her, "Behold, Tlahuitzin, the way in which I have chastised him who offended the gods; but my vengeance will not be complete unless you share his lot." With these words he sent her head rolling by the side of the unfortunate Yappan. Tlahuitzin was immediately changed into a flame-coloured scorpion, and seeking to hide herself under the stones of the altar, found there her husband.

The Mexicans assert that all the scorpions spring from this ill-fated couple, and that from shame for Yappan's sin, they do not dare to show themselves by daylight, but hide under stones. As to Yaotl, he did not escape the punishment of his double crime, and was metamorphosed into a grasshopper.

On examining the religion of the Mexicans for the affinities it may present to that of the peoples of the Old World, it cannot be concealed that there is ground for more than one curious analogy. We find in this Transatlantic nation, so different from Europe, certain general traits common to all the religions of the old continent, having for result a peculiar harmony between them, for which it is difficult to account unless by referring them to a common birthplace. Thus, among the traditions of the Mexicans may be remarked the idea of a common mother of mankind, who is always represented as having a

serpent with her, reminding one of Eve in the Semitic tradition. Some of the sacred pictures represent a spotted serpent, cut in pieces by the Great Spirit Tezcatlipoca, or by the sun, under the figure of the god Tonatiuh. Here we have the serpent Python, killed by Apollo; or the dragon laid low by the Archangel Michael; or, as in the Brahminical books, the serpent Kalya, or Kaligana, vanquished by Vishnu under the form of Krishna. The Tonatiuh of the Mexicans has many analogies with the Krishna of the Hindoos, and the Mithras of the Persians. The woman with the serpent had twin children, that recal Cain and Abel. To complete the analogy, an Aztec painting, preserved in the Vatican, represents them struggling with each other. Mexican tradition mentioned an universal inundation, from which one family alone, that of Coxcox, escaped, like Noah's; and then an edifice, in the form of a pyramid like the Tower of Babel, erected by the vanity of men, and hurled down by the anger of the celestials. It would be easy to cite other similarities between the cosmogony and religious ideas of the Mexicans and those of the peoples of Asia, a part of the world that closely neighbours the western coast of America. One of the

most remarkable is the system of successive destructions and regenerations of the universe. This opinion, which connects the return of the grand cycles of the world's life with the renovation of matter, goes back on our continent, according to Humboldt's observation, to the highest antiquity. The sacred books of the Hindoos speak of *four ages* already, and of cataclysms that have at different epochs destroyed the human species. A tradition of five ages, like that of the Mexicans, is found on the tableland of Thibet. Between Mexico, as depicted by the Spanish conquerors, and the Thibet described to us at this day, very many affinities might be pointed out. They are specially observable in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the multitude of religious congregations, and in the extreme austerity in the practice of penances, either submitted to or voluntarily imposed. It must be admitted that in these various matters it was not only with the religion of Thibet, or with that of the ancient civilizations of Asia, that the Mexican offered points of contact—it was with Christianity as well, and particularly with Catholic worship.

Other coincidences are noticed, fully as curious,

in regard to original sin—to baptism, as a consequence or remedy—to confession, and the Eucharist.

The Mexicans believed in original sin. They considered mankind as thrown on the world for punishment, and in their prayers implored the Divine mercy. "When an infant comes into the world," says Zurita,* "his parents salute it with 'Thou art come into the world to suffer, bear, and take patience.'" They literally *washed it* from original sin, just as do Christians, for the main feature of their baptism consisted in ablutions. They had confession and absolution. The secrets of the tribunal of penitence—for the phrase applies well here—were inviolable; but people confessed but once in their lives, and consequently as late as possible. Probably because, at the epoch when the Spaniards arrived, there was a sort of confusion between the political and the religious authority, from the ascendancy the clergy had assumed in the State and over the

* Alonzo de Zurita was a lawyer, who wrote after a residence of nine years in Mexico. He had been charged, as Oidor of the Audiencia in Mexico, to draw up a report on the different classes of the native chiefs. M. Ternaux-Compans has devoted a volume to him.

mind of the prince, religious absolution purified from crime, even to the exclusion of the secular power; and long after the conquest, Indians pursued by justice were known to demand their release on presenting a certificate of confession from their priest. Lastly, the Mexicans had a ceremony like the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which the priests distributed to the faithful fragments of a cake of maize, which was swallowed whilst prostrate, in the belief that it was the very body of the Divinity.

The notion held by the Mexicans as to a future life is one of the most remarkable traits in their religion. They believed in a paradise and its opposite, and they conceived them in a form of refinement that does great honour to their theologians. With them, the place of torment was not one of material torture, in which the most hideous punishments are accumulated that can be invented by the most excited imagination. The suffering of the damned was principally of a moral kind. They were thrown into profound darkness, and given over to remorse. The life of the elect was passed, during a first period, in the presence of the sun, whom they accompanied with dance and song in his radiant course

along the heavens. After some time, their souls went to animate brilliant clouds or birds of magnificent plumage, and they tasted eternal delights among perfumes and flowers. The joys of paradise were reserved in preference for warriors and those immolated in the sacrifices. The Mexicans admitted in the life hereafter a position intermediate between the place of torment and the perfect paradise; but it was not a purgatory or place of provisional suffering—it was rather an incomplete paradise.

These analogies and resemblances could not escape the first Catholic priests, when they were labouring to convert the conquered Mexicans. According to the bias of their mind and character, some treated them in a kindly spirit, and supposed that the Christian faith had been long ago introduced among these populations by a missionary, of whom all personal trace had been lost, or by means of a miracle. A few went so far as to suggest that Quetzalcoatl was no other than the Apostle St. Thomas. Others looked at the dark side, asserting that it was an offensive copy of the worship of the true God, and that the Evil Spirit had communicated the Christian dogmas to these idolaters to turn them into derision.

But all were struck with the similitudes, and we cannot refrain from considering that they were too multifold and too characteristic to be fortuitous.

One of the circumstances that most surprised the Spaniards was, that the cross was an object of veneration among these idolaters. They first remarked it in Yucatan; but there it was merely an emblem of the God of Rain. The cross presented itself on the very shore of Mexico—locally, it is true—in another character. We read the following in the account of Grijalva's voyage:—"In the isle called Ulua (now San Juan de Ulua, the citadel of Vera Cruz), they adore a cross of white marble, on the top of which is a crown of gold. They say that some one died on that cross who is more beautiful and more resplendent than the sun."*

Their prayers evinced sentiments of touching charity, of pardon, and forgetfulness of injuries. "Live in peace with all the world," said one of their supplications; "bear injuries with humility; leave the care of avenging thee to God, who sees everything."

* Voyage of Grijalva, as related by the chaplain. (The Ternaux Collection.)

The rules of private morality tended to inspire the best feelings towards a neighbour; they read like an emanation of Christian charity. In the exhortation that ended the confession, the priest said to the faithful, "Give food to those who are hungry, clothing to those who are naked, whatever may be the privations that care imposes on thee; for the flesh of the unfortunate is thy flesh, and they are men like unto thyself."

CHAPTER VIII.

HUMAN SACRIFICES.

To judge from the sentiments propagated by the religion of the Aztecs, from the practices it recommended to men in their mutual relations, from the moral ideas that were accredited among them as rules of individual conduct, they would be a kind-hearted people, and Mexico might have claimed, before Philadelphia, the title of *the city of brotherly love.* But oh! the frailty of our nature—the inconsistency of the human heart—these charitable sentiments and practices, this benevolence and equity, this consideration for the female, with reason looked on as the most conclusive proof of gentleness of manners and social culture, were, by a frightful perversion, combined with human sacrifices and cannibal feasts. Men were sacrificed in great numbers on the altars of the gods, and the bodies of the

victims were solemnly devoured at banquets of the grandest display. The Mexicans had, as we have seen, a sacrament that might be called their Eucharist. From a certain date, the bread used was soaked in blood. The mind stands bewildered when it learns that these execrable ceremonies were not with the Mexicans a legacy of barbarism, transmitted from generation to generation, and which their more civilized descendants maintained out of a stupid respect for their ruder ancestors. The notion of these horrors came to the Aztecs when they were in the full current of civilization. The more they progressed, the grander their arts, the more they seemed infatuated for these ferocious practices. One would say they were fascinated by an infernal demon; and we can conceive that the Spaniards should be persuaded they had direct intercourse with Satan.

Let us take a few observations from Humboldt on the origin of these human sacrifices.*

From the commencement of the fourteenth century, the Aztecs lived under the sway of the King of Colhuacan, and it was they who contributed most to the victory that monarch won from the Xochimilcans. The war

* "Vue des Cordillères," by Baron von Humboldt, p. 94.

over, they wished to offer a sacrifice to their principal god, Huitzilopochtli, or Mexitli (the god of war), whose image of wood, placed on a seat of bamboo, called "the chair of God," was borne on the shoulders of four priests. They asked of their master, the King of Colhuacan, to give them some articles of value, to render the sacrifice more solemn. He sent them a dead bird, wrapped up in coarse cloth. To add derision to insult, he proposed to them to be himself present at the festival. The Aztecs feigned to be pleased with the offer, but they at the same time resolved on offering a sacrifice that should inspire their masters with terror. After a long dance around the idol, they brought forward four Xochimilcan prisoners, whom they had concealed for a long time. These unfortunates were immolated, with the ceremonies still observed at the period of the Spanish conquest, on the platform of the great pyramid of Tenochtitlan, which was dedicated to the god. The Colhuans manifested a just horror at this human sacrifice—the first ever perpetrated in their country. Fearing the ferocity of their slaves, and seeing they were flushed with the success obtained in the war against the Xochimilcans, they restored the Aztecs to liberty, enjoining them to quit the territory of Colhuacan.

The first sacrifice had a happy result for the oppressed nation; vengeance soon gave occasion for a second. After the foundation of Tenochtitlan, an Aztec was traversing the shore of the lake to kill some animal that he might offer to the god Mexitli, when he met an inhabitant of Colhuacan, called Xomimitl. Irritated against his old masters, the Aztec attacked the Colhuan hand to

hand. Xomimitl was vanquished, borne off to the new city, and breathed his last on the fatal stone placed at the feet of the idol.

The circumstances of the third sacrifice were still more tragic. Peace had been apparently re-established between the Aztecs and the inhabitants of Colhuacan. The priests of Mexitli, however, could not restrain their hatred against those neighbours under whom they had groaned in slavery, and they meditated an atrocious revenge. They invited the King of Colhuacan to confide to them his only daughter, to be brought up in the temple of Mexitli, and after her death to be there adored as the mother of this protecting deity of the Aztecs; they added that the idol himself spoke his will by their lips. The credulous king accompanied his daughter, and conducted her into the darksome interior of the temple; there the priests separated the pair. A tumult was heard in the sanctuary; the unhappy monarch did not distinguish the groans of his expiring daughter; a censer was put into his hand, and a few moments after he was ordered to light the copal. As the pale glimmer of the flame grew stronger, he recognised his child bound to a post, her bosom bleeding, lifeless and motionless; despair deprived him of his senses for the rest of his days. He himself could not exact vengeance, and the Colhuans dared not match themselves with a people that made themselves dreaded by such an excess of barbarity. The immolated girl was placed among the Aztec divinities, under the name of Teteionan (Mother of the Gods), or Tocitzin, our Great Mother, who must not be confounded with Eve, or the Woman with the Serpent, called Tomantzin.

Soon they solemnly ate the bodies of the victims.

Whatever were the incidents on the occasion when human sacrifices commenced, it appears that this abominable usage was perpetuated among the Aztecs, such as the Spaniards found them in the early part of the sixteenth century, less as the effect of brutal ferocity than as the manifestation of a religious belief. The Mexicans regarded the sojourn of man here below as an expiation and probation; they believed that on the earth "the whole creation groaneth," to make use of St. Paul's expression, and had need of being redeemed. They made it their theological opinion that the Divinity was appeased by blood. Blood, they thought, conciliated the gods, or turned away their anger. In that way they came to maintain and extend as a religious ceremony what was at first, according to all appearance, but a sanguinary warning or a horrible vengeance against the King of Colhuacan. Solis, in "The Conquest of Mexico," puts this explanation of human sacrifices, in so many words, into the mouth of a venerable Cacique of Tlascala, Magiscatzin (the same that Prescott calls Maxixca). He relates that at an interview with Cortez, this chief told him that his countrymen

could not form an idea of a real sacrifice, unless one man died for the saving of others.

This conception of the Mexican religion as to the virtue of blood shed on the altar was common to them and the whole ancient civilization of our own continent. All peoples without exception, before the coming of Christ, whether savage or civilized, sought redemption by blood, because blood, the source of life, seemed to them the offering most agreeable to the angry gods. Everywhere and at all times up to Christianity, the blood of man was poured out to honour the gods, in spite of the protests of reason and human feeling; but among the Romans and Greeks, and the other peoples of antiquity more advanced than the rest, the force of human feeling and the progress of reason had, in the majority of circumstances, but not in all, replaced the blood of our fellow-creatures by that of animals. It has been remarked, in reference to Moses, that there is "not one of the ceremonies prescribed by this legislator—not a purification, even physical—that does not require blood." But it was no longer the blood of men. Even Christianity, which put an end to the effusion of blood on the altar, conformed to what De Maistre calls *the doctrine of substitution*, or the reversion of the

sufferings of innocence to the profit of the guilty. The sins of our fathers, and our own sins, were so washed away by blood. The world had to receive a bath of blood to be cleansed from its early fall. The most learned doctors of the Church have so understood it. "In the immolation of Calvary the altar was at Jerusalem, but the blood of the victim bathed the universe," says Origen, who intended no mere metaphor in the passage, but desired to enunciate a fact mysteriously accomplished. It is true that this time it is the blood of God himself that dispenses with any other *host*, and thenceforth temples are purified from all earthly blood. It is not superfluous to remark even, that the redeeming sacrifice is not made once for all, and that it is perpetuated, for the Mass is not a simple commemoration, and the blood of Christ is therein offered daily.*

It is solely in this sense that De Maistre could say the human sacrifices of the Mexicans and other peoples, ancient or modern, strangers to Christianity, had their origin in the universal conscience of the human race, and pro-

* See J. de Maistre, "Eclaircissements sur les Sacrifices."

[M. Chevalier writes according to the creed of the Roman Catholic Church.—Note by the Translator.]

ceeded from a truth fallen into a state of *putrefaction.*

The explanation of the excessive severity of the Mexican penal code must also, perhaps, be sought for in this quarter, for the notion of restraining men by terror would not of itself alone be a sufficient solution. It may be supposed that the Mexican legislator was of opinion, like the Druids, according to Cæsar's account, that the capital punishment of the guilty was highly agreeable to the Divinity.

It must be told, to the extenuation of these populations, that human sacrifices were not adopted among the different nations of Mexico without a good deal of resistance. The other tribes had at first a horror of the Aztecs, on account of this frightful effusion of human blood. At a later period, the great King Nezahualcoyotl long combated among his own subjects against the taste that led them to adopt these butcheries, after the fashion and at the instigation of the people of Tenochtitlan, and he hoped to bring them back to the pure worship of the Toltecs. However, as he had no children by the wife whom he had carried off from the old lord of Tepechpan, the priests remonstrated with him that this was the effect of the anger of the gods, indignant that blood no longer smoked on their

altars, and at last he yielded. The blood of men was again offered to the gods; but still the heir he looked for came not, and he exclaimed, "The idols of wood and stone are incapable of hearing anything or feeling anything. It is not possible that these can be the authors of heaven and earth, and of man, the monarch of the creation. There is a God more powerful, invisible, unknown, who is the Creator of all things. He alone can console me in my affliction, and support me in the cruel anguish I endure." He secluded himself in his gardens at Tezcotzingo, and passed forty days there in prayer and fasting, offering to the gods copal incense, and burning aromatic herbs on the altars. His prayers were heard. After that, openly reverting to his antipathy against the sanguinary superstitions of the country, he erected the temple of which we have spoken, that was consecrated to "the unknown God—the Cause of causes," and he prohibited human sacrifices, forbidding even the blood of animals to be shed within the edifice. After his death, which took place about 1470, half a century before the conquest, the temples of the kingdom of Tezcuco were again stained with gore, and rivalled those of the Aztecs in the victims slaughtered there.

The historian Prescott, who has little taste for theology, has assigned to these ferocious sacrifices of the Mexicans motives purely *human*. We are often liable to be deceived when we pretend to assign one single motive to the determinations of societies or governments, or even to those of individuals. They almost always flow from manifold and complex causes. It is exceedingly probable we should err in considering these butcheries, consecrated by religion, as the pure and simple effect of the deductions of Aztec theologians in reference to the destiny of man and his relations to the Divinity. But so also should we mistake if we were content to recognise in them nothing but a combined machination of the political and religious leaders of the Aztec empire, in order to spread terror, for the benefit of their own authority. Doubtless, the policy of the emperors and the dominating spirit of the priests availed themselves of these horrible festivals. All earthly powers love to inspire fear; fear creates obedience, which is one of the first necessities of governments as of societies. They have a tendency even to exceed the proportion in which the play of this motive is advantageous; and thus it is that often, in place of the fear that attends respect, they pass to the bounds of terror, if they go not beyond them. This is to be

seen almost everywhere out of the pale of European civilization, and that civilization itself often exhibits the spectacle in its own bosom. These execrable sacrifices among the Aztecs were not, then, solely in conformity to a religious belief among the princes and priests—sincere to the fullest extent, everything leads us to suppose: both one and the other deemed them useful besides to the maintenance or confirmation of their power; but religious faith had its own part in them.

Was it ambition alone, or religious fanaticism alone, that inspired the infamous St. Bartholomew plot? Neither one nor the other isolatedly; it was both. Catherine de Medicis and the persons who, under her and with her, advised the massacre of the Huguenots, feared lest the latter, guided by a chief so eminent and respected as Admiral de Coligny, should gain the ascendant at the young king's court. There is the human motive; but along with it there was another influence, equally as active and energetic—religious fanaticism, the desire of exterminating heresy—a desire sanctified from the pulpit, and unceasingly represented by the Court of Rome to be eminently agreeable to God. In the soul of Catherine de Medicis there might be most of

policy—of that policy without faith or law, and treating murder as a plaything, which distinguished the Italian school of the time. Among certain of her accomplices there was more of religious fanaticism. The crime was the product of these two forces—the complex effect of these two guilty passions. A blind and merciless belief and unbounded ambition were in the same way the simultaneously moving powers that poured out human blood on the altars of the Aztecs.

A fact that surprises, at the first glance, is, that in proportion as the Aztec empire grew larger, and that its civilization appeared to be perfecting, human sacrifices were multiplied. Contradictions of the same kind may be remarked among the Romans and the Christians. The sanguinary games of the circus, and the combats of gladiators, acquired their greatest development under the emperors, when manners were much softened in comparison with the era of the republic. Among the Christians in like manner, at the time when the barbarians were newly converted, and during the centuries that immediately followed, religion was in general more marked by mildness of spirit than at an epoch of civilization and refinement, such as was the sixteenth century. In the sixth and seventh

centuries, although the doctrine of *Compelle intrare* had been exalted to honour by St. Augustine, and turned by him into a sort of dogma, the Sovereign Pontiff, the head of the hierarchy, reproved that systematic and general extermination which the Papacy, notwithstanding, recommended with all its strength, and caused to be carried into practice as far as it could, by kings and parliaments, against the Vaudois, the Albigenses, the Lutherans, and the Calvinists, some six, eight, and nine centuries later. And without going back into history of so distant a date, and keeping to the narrower circle of events almost contemporary, the executions of the Reign of Terror, the butcheries of the Revolutionary tribunal, the horrors accumulated under the auspices of monsters such as Carrier, and accepted by the public opinion of the moment; Paris, the most polished city in the world, crouching under the dictatorship of Fouquier-Tinville; Marat, the frightful Marat, turned into the idol of a numerous public, and, after justice had been done on the monster by the poniard of Charlotte Corday, obtaining the honours of an apotheosis—are not they facts that immediately followed the reign of Louis XV., in which society more and more affected the airs of

universal philanthropy?—and that of Louis XVI., when humanitarian ideas had burst out, and seemed to be on the eve of obtaining uncontested dominion?

Thus, in all countries and among all peoples, events have these afflicting vicissitudes, and present sad and humiliating contradictions, which, I say it in earnestness, do not overthrow the theory of progress, but do carry in themselves solemn warnings. We cannot, indeed, but see in them a reminder of all that there is of weakness in human nature, in unison with those magnificent attributes of which we might have reason to vaunt. Terrible lessons are to be recognised therein, telling us that at all times our very happiest demeanour and noblest acts may be immediately followed by a false step. Instead of giving ourselves up to the intoxication of success when we have been fortunate, and to self-admiration when we have done well, we ought never to cease watching ourselves with severe attentiveness, and our looks ought always to be fixed on the compass that points to the path of duty, of goodness, and of justice.

Be it as it may, it is a fact that there never had been so many human sacrifices as under the last of the Montezumas. That superstitious

prince, influenced by the priests, or tormented by sinister presentiments, the threats of which he thought to avert by deluging the altars with blood, was never weary of augmenting the number of victims. The companions of Cortez had the patience or the courage to count the skulls disposed as trophies in the precincts of a few of the temples; on one occasion they found 136,000. The most moderate estimate is that at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards 20,000 persons were immolated every year. At the inauguration of the grand temple of the god Huitzilopochtli at Mexico, in 1486, thirty-three years before the conquest, 70,000 victims, garnered up during several years in all parts of the empire, were slaughtered one by one. The butchery went on for several days without cessation; the procession of these unfortunates occupied a length of four miles.

The victims were criminals and rebels. When a town had failed in fidelity towards the sovereign, it was taxed in a certain number of beings —men, women, and children. But war contributed most to the supply of sacrifices. In a conversation with Cortez, the Emperor, being interrogated by the *Conquistador* what motive he could have had for not bringing matters to

an end with the Tlascalans, who refused to recognise his sovereignty, replied that if the war had been stopped he would have been embarrassed to procure victims in sufficient number for honouring the gods.

Provided from nations whose creed was similar, the victims submitted to their fate without complaint. The populace regarded them as messengers deputed to the Deity, who welcomed them with favour for having suffered in his honour. They besought them to take charge of their supplications before the gods, and to remind them of their affairs. Each confided to them his wishes, observing, "Since you are going to meet my god, let him know my wants, that he may satisfy them." They decked them out and made them presents before immolation. In certain cases there was a feast in the temple, mingled with dances, in which the captive took part, and at the last moment they entrusted to him the most important message he had to convey to the gods.

Numerous traits of clemency are to be met with in the conquests of the Mexicans, even side by side with reservations made for the altars of their idols. The narrative of the successive aggrandizements of the Aztec empire by Tezozo-

moc, which Ternaux has published in French, shows that they were not always merciless as conquerors. They sometimes gave to their generosity curiously naïve forms, such as might often have occurred to the barbarous invaders of the Roman empire, or to the leaders of Free-Lances in the Middle Ages. Here is an instance, from the conduct of the Emperor Axayacatl, father of Montezuma, towards the old men, women, and children, after the city of Tlatelolco had been carried by assault. The warriors of that city had affected considerable arrogance during the siege:—

Axayacatl and the principal Mexican chiefs then went to look for the old men, women, and children, who were hidden amid the rushes, and of whom a part were buried in the marsh up to the waist, and some even up to the chin, and called to them—"Women, before leaving the water, to show your respect for us, you must imitate the cries of turkeys and water-fowl." The old women immediately began to cry like turkeys, and the young ones like the birds called *cuachil* or *yacatzintli*, till they made such a noise that you would have said the marsh was really full of birds. Axayacatl then permitted them to come out of the lake, and set them at liberty.

Next is an instance of the forms observed towards the conquered, and of the chances of

safety they offered to the bravest of the prisoners:—

There existed in the midst of all the squares in the city circular constructions of freestone and lime, about eight feet in height. They were ascended by steps, and at the summit was a platform round as a quoit, and in the middle a circular stone, fixed to it with clamps, having a hole in the centre. After certain ceremonies the chief prisoner mounted the platform; they bound him by the feet with a small rope to the stone in the centre, and then gave him a sword and a target, to defend himself against the man who made him a captive. If the latter was again the conqueror, he was looked on as a hero whose bravery was beyond all proof, and he received a token in testimony of the valour he had exhibited. If the prisoner bore off the victory from his adversary and from six other combatants, so that he remained the victor of seven in all, he was set free, and all that he had lost during the war was restored to him. It happened one day that the sovereign of a state called Huccicingua (Huexotzingo), was fighting with another city called Tula, when the chief of the latter made his way so far into the midst of his enemies, that his own men could not get up to him. He exhibited wonderful prowess, but his enemies assailed him with so much vigour that they captured him and carried him off with them. They celebrated the accustomed feast, placed him on the platform, and seven men fought against him. They all fell one after the other, though the captive was bound according to usage. The inhabitants of Huexotzingo, seeing what was passing, fancied that

if they set him at liberty, so brave a man would not be at quiet till he had destroyed them all. They came, therefore, to the resolution of killing him. This action drew on them the contempt of the whole country. They were looked on as disloyal men and as traitors, for having, in the person of this grandee, violated the custom established in favour of all chiefs.*

Traits that bespeak a deep sentiment of humanity are to be found in the religion of the Mexicans, in conjunction with these atrocious sacrifices. The reader may remember what has been before said as to their conception of a future life. These immolations, carried out on the grandest scale, in the name of religion, form a fearful contrast with that elevated and purified notion of another life. The pile at least hides the victim in wreaths of smoke. Here the offering was an effusion of blood: the blood was shed, exhibited, made a parade of in the face of the sun, to the attentive gaze of an immense crowd. Conducted by the priests in procession, at a slow pace, to the sound of music and the chant of the ritual, the victim climbed a pyramid that formed the base of the temple, making an entire circuit of it at each of the terraces by

* The Ternaux-Compans Collection, "Relation d'un Gentilhomme à la suite de Cortez," p. 61, of the volume entitled "Recueil de pièces relatives à la Conquête du Mexique."

which it was divided into stories. The stone of sacrifice was at the summit, in the open air, between the two altars on which the sacred fire burnt night and day, before the sanctuary, in shape a lofty tower, that enclosed the image of the god. The people, assembled afar off, looked on in silence at this terrible scene, losing not a single movement. At last, after prayer, the victim was extended over the fatal stone. The sacrificer, laying aside the loose black robe in which he was ordinarily clothed, for a red mantle, more appropriate to this his highest function, approached, armed with an *itzli* knife, opened the breast of the offering, drew from it the reeking heart, smeared with blood the images of the gods, and poured it around him, or, with maize flour, mixed it into a horrible paste. Such is what we find in conjunction with a passion for flowers and the purest ideas! Such is the scene on which the eye of the Mexican gloated fifty times a year, after he had been gently floating that very evening or morning on a *chinampa* over the waters of the lake, breathing an atmosphere of balm, amid a smiling vegetation.

Various circumstances increase the astonishment caused by such practices on the part of

these peoples, and force us to admit that they must have proceeded, without prejudice to other motives, from the doctrine of expiation interpreted by terror: fear is a thousand times more ferocious than courage. Along with these ceremonies of blood, the worship of the Aztecs presented others of unblemished innocence, reminding us of the gentle and tender Abel honouring the Most High. There were processions, mingled with songs and dances, in which the youth of both sexes were rivals in dress and beauty, and displayed extraordinary agility.* Young girls and children, their heads crowned with garlands of flowers, joy and gratitude in their faces, piously carried offerings of fruits, the first growth of the season, and enormous ears of maize, which were deposited before the images of the gods, accompanied with the burning of incense. If any victims were then immolated, they were birds, particularly quails. Such was the character of the worship of the Toltecs, on whose civilization the Aztecs came to graft their own. A few of the ceremonies of the former remained untouched, without the violent hand

* The Aztecs had great dexterity in all kinds of feats of address. Some of them who were taken to the Court of Castille intensely gratified the Spaniards.

of their successors having laid a mark on them. They stood out like a protest of the better instincts of human nature against those that sprung from the imagination of the Aztecs.

These inventions of a frightful mysticism were arranged with a good deal of pomp and art. Each of these bloody sacrifices formed a drama that represented some of the adventures of the god to whom it was dedicated, and thence furnished a morality. Solemnities might be singled out from the number, the spectacle of which would most undoubtedly have been revolting to the men of our age by reason of the tragedy that terminated them; but a description of which it is impossible to read without admiring their majesty, their deep meaning—and I can find no other expression—their elegance. Such was that of the *new fire*, and more so still, the festival of the god Tezcatlipoca, the generator of the universe, the soul of the world.

According to the cosmogony of the Aztecs, the world had undergone four catastrophes, in which everything had perished. They expected a fifth at the end of one of their cycles of fifty-two years, when everything was to disappear, even the sun being blotted out from the heavens. At the conclusion of the cycle, which, like the

end of the year, nearly coincided with the winter solstice, they celebrated a festival commemorative of the end and renovation which the world had four times undergone, and intended also to avert the fifth cataclysm, that by a cruel decree of the gods menaced the human race, the earth, and the stars themselves, without excepting even the one that serves as a focus of light to the whole universe. With this purpose the five days that closed the year were devoted to manifestations of despair. The little images of the gods that adorned and protected the houses, like the Lares of the ancients, were destroyed. The sacred fires that blazed on the pyramid of each *teocalli* (temple) were allowed to die out; the domestic hearth was equally destitute of flame; the furniture was broken to pieces, and the garments rent. Everything wore an aspect of desolation at the coming of those evil spirits who projected a descent upon the earth.

On the evening of the fifth day, the priests, carrying the ornaments of their idols, went in procession to a mountain at two leagues distance, taking with them the most noble victim they could find among the captives. On the summit they awaited in silence the moment when the

constellation Pleiades, which played a great part in the cosmogony of the Aztecs, approached the zenith; at that instant the victim was sacrificed. Fire was obtained by the friction of pieces of wood laid on his gaping bosom; this was the *new fire*, the flame of which was instantly communicated to a funeral pile, on which the sacrifice was consumed. As soon as the ignited pile blazed up on high, cries of joy were shouted forth to the sky from the neighbouring hills, the summits of the temples, and the terraces of the houses, where the assembled nation, upstanding, with looks turned in the direction of the mountain, awaited with anxiety the appearance of this signal of safety. From the sacred pile couriers ran with all speed, bearing burning torches, to distribute the *new fire*, which, as they passed on, immediately burst forth on all sides from the altars and the houses. A few hours afterwards, the sun, showing himself in the horizon, announced to man that the gods had had pity on them, and that for the duration of another cycle the human race was safe from destruction. But, to redeem themselves for the cycle that would follow, it was incumbent on the people for the fifty-two years vouchsafed to them to remain faithful to the law sent from the gods.

The intercalary days that followed, to the number of twelve or thirteen, were devoted to festivity; the houses were repaired, household utensils were provided, new clothing manufactured, and thanks offered up to Heaven.

The festival of the god Tezcatlipoca was of a different character. Aztec mythology figured him under the character of a man of perfect beauty and eternal youth. A year beforehand there was chosen from among the captives the one who was the handsomest, taking care that his body was without blemish. From that day forward the god was personified in him, and priests were attached to his person, whose business it was so to fashion him that his mien should be full of dignity and grace. He was dressed with elegance and splendour; he lived amid flowers; and the most exquisite perfumes were burnt at his approach. When he took the air, he had at his service pages decked with royal magnificence. His movements were entirely at liberty, and as he halted in the streets to play some melody of his choice on an instrument he always carried, the crowd prostrated themselves at his presence as before the Great Spirit, to whom every being was indebted for the breath of life. He led an existence of

splendour and enjoyment until but a month was wanting to the fatal day. Four virgins of rare beauty were now brought to him, who, once his, were thenceforward designated by the names of the four principal goddesses. His last month was thus passed in voluptuousness, taking with him his celestial consorts to sumptuous banquets at the houses of the first persons in the State, who disputed the honour of entertaining him and of paying to him the homage due to the god himself.

The day of sacrifice, however, arrived; the sources of his pleasure suddenly vanished from around him. He bade adieu to his beautiful companions, and one of the emperor's State barges conveyed him to the shore of the lake, a league distant from the city, landing him at the foot of a pyramid consecrated to the god whose personification he had been. The population of the capital and its environs were ranged around. He ascended slowly, making, according to custom, the circuit of each story of the *teocalli*, and halting at certain stations, at every one of which he took off some one of his brilliant insignia, threw away some of the flowers with which his person was adorned, or broke one of the instruments whose tones he had so often called forth. At

the summit of the pyramid he was received by six priests, all, with one exception, clothed in black, with their long hair streaming loose. The sacrifice was consummated, and the heart of the victim, presented first to the sun, was laid at the feet of the idol's statue. Then the priests, addressing themselves to the crowd, drew solemn instruction from this blood-stained myth, preaching that it was the emblem of man's destiny, on whom everything seems to smile at the opening of life, but who often terminates his career in mourning or disaster; repeating to their audience the adage everywhere confirmed by the wisdom of nations, and yet always ready to slip out of men's memory, that the most brilliant prosperity is often trodden on the heel by the gloomiest adversity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRIESTS.

THE position of the priests in Mexican society, and the authority they enjoyed, will be better comprehended after these details on the human sacrifices. When the gods claimed such honours it may be well conceived that their ministers, the organs of their will, and the intermediators between heaven and earth, would be feared and obeyed.

The Mexican clergy formed a numerous, rich, and powerful order in the State; numerous to that degree that the great temple of Mexico, which, it is true, was consecrated to the worship of several gods, and in which Cortez found forty sanctuaries, reckoned five thousand priests. A certain quantity of land was attached to each

temple for the subsistence of the priests and the maintenance of the worship, in which much pomp was displayed. This property was cultivated by tenants, whom they treated with the same liberality witnessed in France and Spain, and throughout Europe, in the times, not far back, when the monastic orders were landowners. By degrees a great portion of the soil of Mexico had passed into the hands of the priests. The devotion of the princes, or their policy, impelled them to favour this aggrandizement of the domains of the clergy. Under the last Montezuma, the territorial wealth of the sacerdotal corps had become immense. The gifts of the faithful added still further to their opulence, by offerings of the fruits of the earth and of productions of all kinds. The Mexican clergy were, however, in themselves a temperate body. The priests lived in the precincts of the temples, praying regularly at certain hours of the day, fasting often, flagellating themselves severely, and tearing their skins with the prickles of the aloe. If they mixed in the world it was not to partake in its pleasures, but to insure their influence. As regards their celibacy, the evidence is contradictory. Cortez expressly says—"The

priests do not marry, and have no intimacy with females." And, indeed, it seems that the men who imposed on society expiations so cruel had themselves to submit to a law of sacrifice. However, Prescott adopts the contrary opinion. May we not believe that a portion of the clergy alone were bound by this rule? So states Pedro de Gante; and the apparent contradiction may thus be explained. The excess of their revenues the priests applied in charity that brings to mind the distributions made at the gates of the Spanish convents. Nevertheless, it does not appear that, like the Peninsular monks, they had a penchant for encouraging or even tolerating idleness. The obligation of labour lies at the bottom of all the precepts of the Aztec religion.

They assigned to themselves a monopoly of education, and, in consequence, took under their care into the temples the youth of both sexes of the noble and middle class, the priestesses bringing up the girls, and the priests the boys. They retained the children of the chiefs till the day of their marriage as devotee neophytes, and let their hair grow, not to be cut till then. The education had several stages, and everything in

the plan of instruction had a religious meaning or purpose. The amusement of the girls was to braid with their own hands the ornaments for the altars and sanctuaries. The boys kept up the sacred fires, chanted at the ceremonies like our choir-boys, took care of the flowers that adorned the temples, and renewed the garlands that hung on the statues of the gods. They were initiated in the secrets of science, and taught to read and write the hieroglyphics. In the higher schools, they were made to practice astronomy and astrology, and were familiarized with the principles of the art of government. The discipline of the schools was exceedingly severe: falsehood was proscribed with special rigour, and if a child persisted in its practice, he was made an example of by slitting his lip. Great austerity was displayed in all that related to manners.

After having moulded the mind and heart of the young as they pleased, the Mexican priests placed them out, and pushed them forward in society. Their sway was thus guaranteed.

The sacerdotal order was governed by two High Priests, who were elected from the clergy

by the prince and the principal chiefs. The dignity was bestowed on capacity, let the birth be what it might. The two High Priests had precedence after the sovereign over everybody in the State, and nothing important was decided on without their being consulted.

CHAPTER X.

THE FOUNTAIN OF MEXICAN CIVILIZATION.

This rapid and very incomplete description is certainly favourable to the civilization of the peoples whom the conquering Spaniards found in Mexico. It is sure to be met with incredulity; and the objection that will be placed foremost is, that the natives, still so numerous in Mexico, and forming yet the main bulk of the population, little resemble the portrait I have just drawn of their ancestors — a portrait, moreover, that a score of writers of authority have drawn before me, for in this I am but a humble copyist. A fancy portrait, it will be said; look at the descendants of these peoples asserted to be so civilized! To this Prescott appears to me to have replied victoriously in the following reflections:—

Those familiar with the modern Mexican will find it difficult to conceive that the nation should ever have been capable of devising the enlightened polity which we have been considering. But they should remember that in the Mexicans of our day they see only a conquered race, as different from their ancestors as are the modern Egyptians from those who built—I will not say the tasteless Pyramids—but the temples and palaces whose magnificent wrecks strew the borders of the Nile at Luxor and Karnac. The difference is not so great as between the ancient Greek and his degenerate descendant, lounging among the masterpieces of art, which he has scarcely taste enough to admire, speaking the language of those still more imperishable monuments of literature which he has hardly capacity to comprehend. Yet he breathes the same atmosphere, is warmed by the same sun, nourished by the same scenes as those who fell at Marathon, and won the trophies of Olympic Pisa. The same blood flows in his veins that flowed in theirs; but ages of tyranny have passed over him—he belongs to a conquered race.

The American Indian has something peculiarly sensitive in his nature. He shrinks instinctively from the rude touch of a foreign hand. Even when this foreign influence comes in the form of civilization, he seems to sink and pine away beneath it. It has been so with the Mexicans—under the Spanish domination their numbers have silently melted away; their energies are broken. They no longer tread their mountain plains with the conscious independence of their ancestors. In their faltering step, and meek and melancholy aspect, we read the sad characters of the conquered race. The

cause of humanity, indeed, has gained; they live under a better system of laws, a more assured tranquillity, a purer faith; but all does not avail. Their civilization was of the hardy character that belongs to the wilderness; the fierce virtues of the Aztec were all his own. They refused to submit to European culture, to be engrafted on a foreign stock. His outward form, his complexion, his lineaments, are substantially the same; but the moral characteristics of the nation, all that constituted its individuality as a race, are effaced for ever.*

We may, however, put to ourselves the question, Whence was the civilization of these peoples derived? It is difficult to reply with certainty. At the end of the twelfth century, various bodies of the same family came from the North, and settled in the beautiful valley of Mexico, designated to this day, but with greatly extended limits, by its old name of Anahuac. There were the Chichimecs, a barbarous race; and then the Nahuatlecs, in several distinct tribes, among whom we may distinguish the Acolhuans, or people of Tezcuco; the Mexicans, properly so called, or Aztecs; the people of Tlascala, or, at least a part of them†; those of Chalco and Xochimilco, and the Tepanecs. The mysterious region

* Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," vol. i. pp. 41, 42.

† There is reason to believe that the population of Tlascala included a large number of Chichimecs.

that had served as their point of departure was known among the Aztecs by the name of Aztlan. Their pilgrimage had been long and perilous, and signalized by numerous vicissitudes. They had halted at various stations, one of which is probably indicated by the ruins called Casas Grandes, scattered on the banks of the Rio Gila. But their march was not definitively arrested till they encountered the sign predicted by the oracle—an eagle, perched on a nopal, growing out of a rock standing in solitude amid the waters, and holding a serpent in its beak.* On this spot they founded their city of Tenochtitlan, since become, under the name of Mexico, one of the most beautiful in the universe. We are assured that, in the neighbourhood of Nootka Sound, on the western coast of North America, and throughout the whole space between fifty and sixty degrees of latitude, tribes are still seen in existence whose idiom, in various dialects, has remarkable affinities with the Mexican language.

The bodies of men who made their appearance on the Mexican mountain plain towards the end of the twelfth century found there nations possessing the attributes of civilization. They were

* This incident has been adopted for the national arms of independent Mexico.

the heirs rather than the direct descendants of the Toltecs—a remarkable people, of whom we have already spoken.

It may be conceived that Asia, the common mother of all the civilizations of the ancient world, had contributed in some part to furnish the elements of Mexican society, or had, at least, supplied a contingent to the religious notions and to the sciences of the Anahuac nations. Traditions which, as we have seen, come near, in various points, to our Biblical revelations, and which are to be found, sometimes with a slight modification, in the religions of Asia, would seem to have reached them from thence. The fact is, that communication from Asia to the north-west of America is very easy. Behring's Strait, that separates the two continents in about sixty-six degrees of latitude, is little more than sixty miles wide; and there are islands even in the middle of that narrow channel that would serve as intermediate stations.* Without ascending alto-

† According to Humboldt, the Tchuktches of Asia, in spite of their inveterate hatred to the Esquimaux of Kotzebue's Gulf, cross by this route to the American coast; so that of the entire offspring of the Old Continent, these savages were the first, from all appearances, to visit the New; but they went there without seeing anything, learning anything, or bringing anything back.

gether to those northern latitudes where Asia has never presented anything but icy regions and tribes completely barbarous, there is no difficulty in crossing in a canoe to the American coast from Kamschatka, or even from Japan, by the Kurile Islands, going from island to island of the long Aleutian archipelago, so as not to be more than forty-eight hours at sea at any one time. We may further remark that a chain of islands, of immense length, extends without any considerable interruption from the Chinese shores, if not from a much further distance, to America; for the Aleutian Isles stretch from Kamschatka to the new continent; and between China and Kamschatka we find Formosa, then the cluster of the Loo-Choo Islands, next the Japanese group, and lastly, the Kuriles. At the epoch when the Celestial Empire, having more vitality than at the present day, felt the need of room—though since that its every effort has been for segregation — the spirit of commerce and of religious propagandism impelled men to track this immense causeway of more than three thousand miles long—sometimes submarine, and at others making its appearance in archipelagos stretched along the surface of the waters—which connects the most beautiful regions of Asia with

the New World. Two hundred years before our era, the Chinese annals mention the mystical expedition of Tsin-Chi-Houang-si, who explored the Oriental seas, "to find an elixir that confers immortality on the soul." These trading and then sea-going nations possessed of old the mariner's compass. We are then warranted in conjecturing—with the reservation of the opinion being checked, if possible, by the testimony of history, and that of archæology, or even of physiology, in default of all the rest—that some at least of their navigators found their way to the New Continent. For peoples as civilized and as powerful as those of China, Japan, and India, what, in fact, was a voyage to America compared with the peregrinations that savages have succeeded in accomplishing on the same vast ocean, over distances of more than twelve hundred miles; from Otaheite, for example, to New Zealand, as is established by the analogy of idioms and customs?

The anatomical resemblances between the Asiatics of the far East and the indigenous Americans are so numerous that Humboldt felt justified in expressing himself thus:—"We cannot refuse to admit that the human species presents no races more allied than those of the

Americans, the Mongol, the Mantchoo, and the Malay." Yet this argument is far from sufficient to establish that the inhabitants of America came from Asia. Science does not contradict the Biblical tradition of the oneness of the human race, and from the moment we believe in that oneness, it is a simple consequence to admit that proximity of place—extreme proximity in this instance, as we have just seen—involves that of the conformation of man, as it has caused that of the plants produced by the two continents, where they approach each other, either by Greenland or Kamschatka.

What we have stated of the religious beliefs and traditions of the ancient Mexicans offers analogies to the cosmogony or theology of the peoples of the old continent far too numerous for the coincidence to be considered as absolutely fortuitous. In presence of such facts, it seems impossible to refuse to admit that communications existed between one continent and the other, and that the civilization of the ancient Mexicans received and retained the impress, unless we take refuge in absolute scepticism, or, as was said by Frederic the Great, unless we have vowed a resolute worship of "her Majesty Chance."

The number of these analogies, joined to the facilities given by nature for the passage, leads to the idea that communication with China had more to do with the development of Mexican civilization than relations with Europe. Humboldt considers that the cycles of the Aztec cosmogony present in this regard elements of positive demonstration; but he mentions other similarities so striking that they must enforce conviction on the most repugnant mind. I quote one, the most remarkable of all:—

The calendar of the Aztecs distinguishes the successive days by twelve signs, intended for certain animals. The peoples of Mongol origin designate the twelve signs of the zodiac in like manner by figures of animals. Of the twelve adopted by the Orientals, four exist in Mexico,* and they are found in the Mexican calendar. Three others, that Asia exhibits, were wanting in Anahuac; but they had, if not similar ones, some that were at least more or less close in analogy; and these the Mexicans used in their place.†

* The hare, the serpent, the monkey, and the dog.

† Among the Mongols they are, the leopard, the crocodile, and the fowl, replaced in the Mexican calendar by the *ocelotl* (a ferocious quadruped, resembling the jaguar, but smaller), the lizard, and the eagle.

The other five Mongol signs, having neither similars nor analogies in Mexico, animals quite different were substituted for them.* And here it must not be lost sight of, that as the Mongol signs were adopted, in preference, to indicate the successive years of the series composing their cycles, they employed them also to represent the months and days, and even the hours. In short, the signs of the Aztec calendar, like that of the Mongols, had an astrological use, for the Mexicans were ardently devoted to astrology.

The lunar calendar of the Hindoos, formed of signs still more arbitrary, manifests a curious correspondence with that of the Aztecs.†

Here then, if I mistake not, are convincing reasons in support of the opinion that Mexico was not without having had some relations with the civilized inhabitants of Asia; but yet it would be rash to hold Mexican civilization as nothing more than an offshoot of the Asiatic

* The mouse, the ox, the horse, the sheep, the pig.

† I refer the reader, on this point, and on the whole subject of the affinities evinced by Mexican civilization with that of Asia, to the work of Humboldt entitled "Vues des Cordillères et Monuments des Peuples indigènes de l'Amérique."

stock. In Europe we find in our institutions, and we carry in our persons, the proof of Greek and Roman affiliation. Without having recourse to philology, to technology, or the study of religion and manners, history the most authentic forbids doubt on that point. We trace back to the Romans and Greeks by the route of colonization or conquest; and with very little effort we can discover amongst us direct and certain signs of an origin still more ancient, that makes our civilization descend from the Egyptian and Aryan. There are no such direct links, so multiplied, so intimate, between Asia and Mexico. Descent shows itself by striking similarities in everyday life. Now, the Mexicans had neither the useful animals of Asia—the horse, the ox, the sheep, the camel—nor its silkworm, nor alimentary grain. Asia lives on rice; the others were fed on maize. The Mexicans were ignorant of iron, which was known in Asia fifteen centuries before the Christian era. Their writing and their notation do not resemble those of the Asiatics; nothing has been discovered common to their language and to the idioms of Asia. But if Mexico had been colonized by Asiatics, the mark of it would have remained in all these particulars. The Chinese and

Japanese have annals regularly handed down, and notwithstanding what De Guignes has said, nothing therein refers to the discovery of a continent, nothing points to intercourse with a country situated like America. On the other hand, no reminiscence of China and India existed in Mexico. So that the Mexicans were, with regard to Asia, neither children, nor colonists, nor pupils. The communication between Anahuac and the eastern coast of the old continent was probably reduced to contact with a few isolated Asiatics, driven out of their course, from whom the Mexicans had drawn some notions of science and astrology, and a few traditions of cosmogony, but who never returned to tell their countrymen they had discovered a new world, with a wonderful climate, so as to attract them thither. What the Toltecs and Aztecs had received from the great peoples of Asia may have contributed to their advancement, and even to their organization; but it was not what incorporated them into a civilized nation.

Certain of the American traditions induce the belief even that the other side of the old continent, that most distant from China—Europe, in short—furnished some of the elements of

Mexican civilization, and even of that of the Americans in general. In fact, among the regularly organized peoples met with by the Spaniards in the New World, on the three mountain-plains of Mexico, Cundinamarca, and Peru, tradition represented their instructors as arriving from the East, and not from the West. Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, Bochica in the country of Cundinamarca, and Manco-Capac in Peru, came from beyond the mountains, or even from beyond the sea, from the side on which the sun rises, and the descriptions given of their persons apply to our Caucasian race better than to any other. Quetzalcoatl in particular presents this characteristic in the highest degree. His European origin is attested, moreover, by the direction he takes on leaving Mexico. As we have seen, he chose that of Europe. Now, it can scarcely be doubted that he was then desirous of returning to the country from whence he came.

That which makes it difficult to decide on the share of influence exercised by Asia or Europe on ancient Mexico is that those two portions of the world exhibit incontestable points of connexion with each other. Prescott remarks that in certain usages of the Aztecs, as in their funeral

ceremonies, resemblances are to be found alike to those of Catholics, Mussulmans, and Tartars, and to those of Greek and Roman antiquity. The observation is perfectly accurate; but it by no means follows that we are bound to eliminate one or the other, Asia or Europe, from the sources of ancient Mexican civilization. Christians and Mussulmans—the Tartar hordes on the one hand, Rome and Greece on the other—had points of departure in their civilization that were, in a certain degree, common to them: they have drawn from a common source. The action that Europe and Asia may have exercised on the New World may have thus been concurrent in imprinting on it a certain stamp; and if those figures of crosses that called forth the historian's observation can raise a doubt, it is not on the matter of the existence of relation between Mexico and the two extremities of the old continent—it would be solely on the question of deciding what portion it is of that continent that stamped on Mexico the deepest imprint.

The safest, or the least uncertain, course is to consider Mexican civilization as autochthonous in its general organization. The Red races found among themselves the principal materials

of their religious, social, and political edifice. Superior beings extracted the elements from the depth of their own genius, or received them from the effect of one of those revealing illuminations to which we must have recourse as a supreme cause when we essay to trace back to the origin of societies. And if, among the analogies that have been invoked in favour of the divers systems in accordance with which Mexican civilization would proceed from one of those of the Old World, there be traits of material resemblance calculated to seize on the imagination—such as colossal pyramids set to the points of the compass, some other architectural characteristics, and the use of hieroglyphics—it is well to ask if it would not be more judicious to attribute them to the fact that man is, to a certain point, a likeness of himself, in his works no less than in his person. What is there surprising, then, in the circumstance that the earlier ages of empires situated in analogous climates, however separated they might be by distance, should spontaneously offer a few similarities?*

* Among the systems that have been produced on th subject of the sources of Mexican civilization, we ought to mention that of the late Lord Kingsborough, who deduced

There remain, after all, a certain number of traces of the intellectual or scientific order before which sound criticism will pause, and recognise that there did exist relations between the inhabitants of Mexico and the civilizations of the old continent, whether those of the eastern or of the western extremity—that is, of Europe. It seems to me that at the close of the inquiry an impartial mind will attribute to the Asiatic peoples a part notably more extended or less restricted than to those of our own Europe.

To the man who loves his fellow-creatures, and desires that the advancement of civilization should be accomplished with as much regularity as possible, and without its stages being marked

it direct from the Jews. It is possible, in fact, to collect conjectures in favour of that opinion; but nothing has been discovered that would constitute elements of certainty—nothing that could be equivalent to the proofs we have of a communication with the easternmost part of Asia. This system, however, if it makes no proselytes, at least produced an admirable historical memorial: it is a fac-simile of whatever have been preserved of the Aztec manuscripts, with drawings of the antiquities of Central America, and the text of the "Universal History of New Spain," by Sahagun, the Franciscan, who was long a resident in Mexico, dating from the year 1529. Lord Kingsborough displayed in this publication that lavish expenditure of which the British aristocracy delight in furnishing striking examples.

by catastrophes, a subject of more interesting study than to penetrate into the sources of Mexican civilization would be to know what is the future reserved for this Red race, which at this very hour still forms the bulk of the Mexican population. Undoubtedly the White inhabitants of Anahuac deserve to excite the solicitude of the philosopher and the statesman, and of the world; but it may be held that there are qualities more original in the recesses of the mind and heart of the indigenous population. Placed in other conditions than the subjection under which it has groaned for the last three centuries, this race might probably aspire to useful destinies, and to supply an unexpected contingent to the general civilization. But how venture into the darkness of the future in the endeavour to solve a problem so difficult?

PART II.

THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO BY CORTEZ.

CHAPTER I.

LANDING OF THE SPANIARDS—INTERVIEW WITH THE MEXICANS.

By what events came European civilization, in the sixteenth century, to graft itself on that of Anahuac? What was the character of the conquest of Cortez? Which are the incidents in it most worthy to be recorded in history?

To a man of the nineteenth century, who is the heir of the eighteenth, and consequently, do what he will, not cut out for a devotee, some effort is necessary to comprehend the spirit that animated the Spaniards, the Conquerors of the New World. We judge the morality of events in times past by the ideas of our own, and that course is often for the best; for we may flatter ourselves that we are less imperfectly initiated in the notion of eternal justice than the generations that preceded us by several centuries. Our

scales are more exact. We possess secrets that contemporaries were ignorant of: coming after them, we perceive effects they were unable to distinguish. In brief, we are not, as they were, judges and parties in the cause. Yet when the purpose is not to appreciate the moral value of actions, but simply to recognise their most salient features, he who looks at them with the eyes of his own epoch is exposed to error. Many times it thus occurs that he gazes on a panorama where the objects are in a false light, for he has placed himself out of the point of view.

Thus, religious ideas not being potent enough at the present day to impel nations to conquest, we are inclined to neglect or to depreciate their influence on the events of former times. We repeat in regard to the Spaniards the judgment that the eighteenth century—inspired thereto by passions the generous spirit of which, and its opportuneness to the time, I do not deny—pronounced against them, without the case being sufficiently understood. We take it as settled that thirst for gold was the sole motive for their enterprises in the New World. I do not pretend that the love of wealth and the hope of creating for themselves great fortunes and grand establishments was a stranger to those enterprises.

There are human motives in all the actions of men; but for the credit of our species, we may hold it as certain that, on all occasions when there has been a display of heroic qualities well sustained, man has been obedient to noble inspirations. It is repugnant to believe that cupidity alone can beget heroes. In Cortez and his companions there was more and better than the desire of enriching themselves, or of making a princely position in the Indies. To say the contrary is as if we should assert that when, in 1789, France roused herself to take the cause of liberty in hand, the enthusiasm that filled the nation, and enabled her to run a glorious career of a quarter of a century without drawing breath, was inspired by aught else than a profound feeling for the rights of the human race. It is as if we should maintain that the prodigies with which France astonished the world during that period proceeded simply from a foolish vanity of the *bourgeois*, envious of the precedence of the nobility.

The records of history on the subject of the Spanish conquests on the continent of America are numerous and varied enough for us to find therein all the information that can be desired. They attest that the Spanish expeditions took

place mainly under the auspices of a religious sentiment. That interest and ambition should ally themselves to this sentiment is nothing more than the duality of human nature—the duality in virtue of which the soul is united to the body. I might cite Columbus, who set out with the hope of meeting and converting the Grand Khan, and who, when he beheld that there was gold in the New World, went on in the search for it only in order to furnish the outlay for a crusade in the Holy Land—which did not hinder his being infinitely jealous of what related to his title of Admiral of Castille, and to the material advantages that were attached to it. Cortez, like Columbus, like all the Spaniards of the time, who had but just recovered Spain from the Moors, had in his soul a faith that was active and aggressive. Men's imaginations, throughout the Peninsula, were excited on behalf of religion. It was faith that had given to a troop of cavaliers who took refuge in the Asturias strength to resist the armies of the Caliphs, and bit by bit to wrest from them the soil of the entire country. Of what was a man not capable when fighting for the faith! The religious ardour natural to the time was heightened by everything that the sacred flame of patriotism could

add thereto. To bring infidels to subjection, to establish the worship of the Cross in countries where the sign of redemption had never yet been reared, was, to the youth who followed with transport the steps of the conquerors of Cordova and Grenada, glory in the supreme and happiness unparalleled. An expedition to the New World thus became a crusade. War against the Indians was a holy war, from the single fact of their being infidels. To make them confess to the faith was a merit beyond comparison. With that in hand, it little mattered that a man might have given the reins to his passions, might have been licentious or covetous, or have bathed in blood: every sin was redeemed by so good a work, and the path to heaven made straight. All means were excellent, and all acts lawful towards such miscreants, provided they were brought to accept baptism.

Cortez, like all other men, great or small, belonged to his own time. He partook in various degrees of its illusions and prejudices, as of its courage and faith. His chaplain, Gomara, has preserved for us the harangue he addressed to his troops on reviewing them at Cape San Antonio, at the moment of definitively quitting the island of Cuba. It finishes with the words—

that if their number was small, they had with them the Almighty, who had never abandoned the Spaniards in their conflicts with the infidels. What mattered the multitude of the enemy to be encountered when fighting under the banner of the Cross! This conviction never left him, and he upheld it among his companions. Here was a great reason why they should triumph. The best way for a man to accomplish a work, however difficult it may be, is to persuade himself that he cannot fail. Cortez was a character of extraordinary sagacity, of able policy, of unequalled intrepidity, of unheard-of vigilance, and of consummate prudence, combined with prodigious audacity. He possessed in the highest degree command over himself—the pledge and condition of command over others. To all these natural gifts were added, from one end of the conquest to the other, incredible good fortune: elements and events seemed to conspire in his favour. Still the principal cause of his success was his faith.

At the island of Cozumel, the first point at which he touched, scarcely had he reassured the inhabitants, whom his lieutenant, Alvarado, having landed before him, had terrified into flight by his violence and his love of pillage, than he

set about converting them. On their refusal to renounce idolatry, he ordered his men to seize on the statues of the gods, and to throw them from top to bottom of the temples, built, like those of the Mexicans, on pyramids. An altar was erected in the Pagan sanctuary, at which Father Olmedo said mass; and the Indians, astounded that the gods had not immediately inflicted death on the foreigners who had outraged them in their sanctuaries and images, allowed themselves to be baptized. Thence Cortez passed into the province of Tabasco, where he found a population more numerous, more warlike, and more advanced in the arts. These offered human sacrifices, after the execrable custom propagated by the Aztecs. The natives refused to hold communication with the expedition, and a battle was imperative. The combat was obstinate and bloody. A saint, mounted on a grey horse, was seen to descend from heaven, to place himself at the head of the Spanish cavalry, and to lead them to the charge. Not a soul in the army doubted it, and in writing an account of the affair to the sovereigns of Castille, Cortez says, "Your royal highnesses may hold it for certain that this victory was won less by our forces than by the will of God; for wha

could we do, four hundred men as we were, against forty thousand warriors?" Terrified by the artillery and cavalry, bewildered at the audacity of this handful of men, whom they took for supernatural beings, the Indians renounced their idolatry. Their conversion was celebrated with pompous ceremony on the following Sunday, which happened to be Palm Sunday; and then the Spaniards embarked again, bound for the Mexican territories, where they had learned there dwelt a great sovereign, the head of a very numerous people who possessed much gold.

Interviews took place between Cortez and Teuhtlile, governor for Montezuma of the province corresponding with what is now the neighbourhood of Vera Cruz; and afterwards, with Teuhtlile, appeared envoys direct from Montezuma. There ensued an interchange of communications and messages from the camp of the Spaniards to the court of the Aztec emperor. Everything passed between Cortez and the personages that were sent to him with high etiquette, as became the representatives of two potentates, each of whom took himself to be the first monarch in the universe. From the very commencement, Montezuma, by his representatives, assumed the attitude of a sovereign who had no wish for

foreigners to make their way into his States. Cortez demanded, in pressing terms, that he should be permitted to go to the capital and salute the Emperor on the part of his master. The reply he received was always the same, that he was not to come. The explanation of Montezuma's obstinate refusals is, that strange rumours were in circulation through the Aztec empire at the period when Cortez landed. Some said that the moment assigned for the return of the God Quetzalcoatl had arrived. According to others, disasters were to be expected, and the empire was under the stroke of imminent calamities. The news of the arrival of the Spaniards in the New World had reached the country, and at that there is no reason for surprise; for several years had rolled by since Christopher Columbus set foot on the main land. That was far from the Mexican shore; but the expeditions of Cordova and Grijalva had exhibited Spaniards in arms in Yucatan and the Gulf of Mexico. Thence the Mexicans had positive intelligence of the Spaniards, and almost the echo of their artillery, which had scattered terror and death in the former place. They were looked on as formidable beings, with whom contact would be fatal. Their hostility to the religion of the country was known,

which added twofold to the terror inspired by their approach. When a people's imagination is excited, they are prompt to see signs of the Divine will in every fortuitous event that occurs, and to perceive sinister prognostics in the slightest incidents. The fall of a thunderbolt, the overflow of a river or lake, a fire—still more, a comet of more than ordinary blaze, or an earthquake, however little the earth may be shaken—pass for auguries at which there is reason to be alarmed, as the forerunners of some calamity. In their excitement men's minds give unheard-of proportions to all the phenomena of nature, and they invent some that never existed, though they serve none the less to augment the general disquiet and terror.

Such was the situation at the court and capital of the Aztec emperor. Monstrous prodigies were talked of, and indications of an approaching universal catastrophe had been beheld in all parts; but no one was so frightened as Montezuma, probably because the priests, from a presentiment that their bloodthirsty sway was about to be overthrown, breathed a thousand fears into his superstitious soul. If the Spaniards gained authority in the country it was over with them, and they persuaded Montezuma that he too

would be a lost man. In all that they neither deceived themselves nor led astray the unfortunate prince.

Thence it was that Montezuma, from the very commencement of the negotiations opened by Cortez, showed himself tormented by a desire to keep the Spaniards at a distance from the capital. By his envoys he deterred them from coming, bidding them say, in the style of a man accustomed to be obeyed, that it was not agreeable to him; but at the same time, like a magnificent prince, he loaded them with presents, not reflecting that the more he convinced them what treasures he possessed, the deeper would he root in them the determination to stay. The presents consisted of cotton cloths of great beauty, and feathered stuffs—a manufacture in which, as mentioned before, the Mexicans excelled, and which was indeed peculiar to them—with trinkets and articles of gold and silver manufacture of great weight, and of a fashion equal to the material. Among those in the precious metals, the Spaniards were struck above all with two round plates—one of gold, the other of silver—as large, say the chroniclers, as the wheels of a carriage. The plate of gold was of admirable workmanship, and from the weight of

the metal left far behind anything there was in Europe. Bernal Diaz values the material at more than 20,000 *pesos de oro;* and if the *peso* was equal, as Prescott thinks, to 2*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* sterling, we must set down the value of this single article at 52,500*l.** Gold-dust there was, too, in helmets filled to the brim; for Cortez had told Teuhtlile that his companions were subject to an affection of the heart, for which gold-dust was a specific remedy. The Spaniard responded to the gifts as he could—by a cap ornamented with a medal in gold representing St. George and the dragon; by holland shirts, the finest he possessed (the Mexicans had no knowledge of linen); and by articles of glass-work, that would appear of great value to people ignorant of the art and manufacture. By these exchanges of presents good relations were thought to be established. The Indians of the vicinity brought provisions to the Spaniards in abundance, and were put at their disposal for all their wants. Cortez continued his negotiations for permission to go to Tenochtitlan, the capital of Montezuma; but the latter persisted in his refusals, endea-

* This is the value according to weight. The same weight then represented a value at least quadruple what it would at the present day.

vouring to soften their unpleasantness by fresh presents, gold always figuring among them.

Cortez profited by these conferences with Montezuma's officers to show them the means at his command. He exercised his soldiers before them, making his horsemen gallop and manœuvre, his war-trumpets sound, and his fire-arms peal out their thunder. The artillery struck the Mexicans aghast. The fire and the smoke these pieces projected with a loud report, the balls that broke or hurled down the distant trees, left an impression of terror on their minds.

In the midst of one of these interviews that settled nothing, the hour for vespers sounded, and Cortez, tired of Aztec delays, resolved on this occasion to produce an effect. By his order Father Olmedo began a sermon, in which he set forth the mysteries of Christianity, and announced that the Spaniards had come into the country to extirpate idolatry and establish the worship of the true God. On concluding, he distributed little images of the Virgin with the Christ in her arms. The two interpreters already mentioned, Aguilar, the Spaniard who had been prisoner in Yucatan, and Marina, the young Indian girl given to Cortez by the principal cacique of Tabasco, translated the good Father's

address to the astonished Aztecs as well as they could. This attempt at conversion, in place of touching the people whom it was hoped to make neophytes, inspired them with repugnance or affright. From that moment all relations were broken off. Not one of the natives was to be seen at the camp; no more provisions came forward; and the malcontents among the Spaniards began to say that it was time to think of returning to Cuba with the sumptuous presents of the Mexican emperor.

CHAPTER II.

FOUNDATION OF VERA CRUZ—THE ADVANTAGE CORTEZ DERIVES FROM IT—HE DESTROYS THE FLEET.

During these incidents Cortez was reflecting on his situation, and thinking of the means of strengthening the ground under his feet. The task he had undertaken exhibited itself, what it really was, beset with difficulties. Perils surrounded him on all sides. Peril muttering from the bosom of the country to which he had come: he might at any moment be crushed by the forces of Montezuma, whose dissatisfaction was plain. Peril on the side of Velasquez, who in his rage might allow himself to go all lengths and resort to any perfidy, and who reckoned even among the leaders of the expedition friends ready to rally to his cause, if any emissary from Cuba appeared on the coast. Peril among the body of

the soldiery, who were suffering cruelly: they were roasted by the sun, a prey to myriads of dangerous or disagreeable insects, and decimated by disease. Thirty had already died; suffering and inactivity made the rest lend an ear to every insinuation and every plot. Still greater peril on the side of Madrid, where he, Cortez, had been denounced as a rebel to a suspicious King, and to the President of the Council of the Indies, Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, a man of malevolent disposition. It was necessary to quit an inactivity that perverted the *morale* of his soldiers, and opened every chance to the attempts either of Velasquez or Montezuma. It was necessary, without more delay, to create for himself, by decisive acts, some title to the sympathy, or at the least to the indulgence, of the Court. Cortez resolved then on marching into the interior of the country, and confronting Montezuma in arms. But previously he deemed it proper to found a city on the coast, at the best anchorage he could find. It was to be a fortified place, that should offer protection against any sudden assault of the Aztec emperor and his satraps. Under a commandant to be relied on, it would be a means of getting notice of the expeditions that Velasquez would probably despatch; and a

refuge might be found there in case of a reverse on the march into the interior. The founding this city would at the same time answer other ends: it would furnish Cortez—we shall soon see how—with a legal expedient by which to shield himself before Charles V. against the denunciations of Velasquez, and would deprive the partisans the latter had in his army of every pretext.

The project was carried into execution. The name given by Cortez to the new town is worthy of remark. It carries an indication of the two passions that people are astonished to find linked with each other in the Spanish soul—ardour for religious proselytism and thirst for gold. It was called the Rich City of the True Cross, *Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz.* The site, chosen after the coast had been explored by Montejo, an intelligent officer, sent on that mission with two vessels, was fixed some leagues to the north of the point of disembarkation. Vera Cruz, once before moved to the mouth of the river Antigua, was established in its present position under Philip III.

Meanwhile, Cortez had received a message from the chief of the Totonacs, a tribe settled round Cempoalla, a town in the neighbourhood

of the Spanish camp. Tired of the exactions of the Aztecs, by whom they had recently been subjugated, and who extorted not only heavy taxes but numbers of young men and women for immolation at the capital, this cacique demanded a visit from, and the assistance of, these wonderful strangers, who hurled thunder and had with them animals of irresistible speed. He frankly developed the motives he had for desiring the intervention of the Spaniards. He boasted of having a hundred thousand combatants—an extreme exaggeration, though Cempoalla, his capital, really had thirty thousand inhabitants. To Cortez this was a revelation. This great Mexican empire was not then compact and united; it had within it germs of division. A skilful policy might find auxiliaries within it to open the path to dominion. The cacique's overture was, therefore, welcomed with amity, and preparations were made for marching on Cempoalla.

Before putting himself in motion, Cortez contrived to ensure his personal position to the utmost in his power. By favour of a new organization, founded on the sort of autonomy that had from time immemorial appertained to the municipalities of Spain, he broke the chain

of that apparent subordination that still bound him to Velasquez, the Governor of Cuba. This revolution was effected without his appearing to do anything more than follow the movement going forward in the New World, by establishing a colony that, in virtue of its municipal rights, would nominate its own officers. The municipal council of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, founded partly for that very object, chose as their head Cortez, who had beforehand resigned all his functions; and they conferred on him that entire authority which was consistent with the situation of the Spaniards in a foreign country, in the midst of future or already declared enemies. They gave him the title and attributes of Captain-General and Chief Justice.

The business, however, was not consummated without opposition. The partisans of Velasquez broke out into violent speeches and threats; Cortez replied by a severity the more opportune that it was little expected. He ordered the principal opponents to be put in irons and carried on board the vessels. Prompt suppression quieted the storm, and Cortez was enabled to set the prisoners at large in a few days. This creation of a colony gave Cortez a title which he might in strictness oppose to the

claims of Velasquez, who himself, in fact, held his authority only at second-hand. He was in Cuba not in virtue of a title emanating from his sovereign, but simply as a delegate—a subaltern of the Spanish commander residing in Hispaniola (since called San Domingo). This commander was Diego Columbus, brother of the defunct admiral. To be successful at Madrid, however—at that court that was looking for gold from its acquisitions in the New World, but saw very little arrive—something more was necessary than a resolution of the municipal council of a city that was yet to be built, and was at best but a kind of entrenched camp. It was necessary to be able to show the gold; it was necessary to pour it into the coffers of the monarch. Cortez, therefore, proposed to his companions, wonder-struck at the presents sent by Montezuma, and impatient to have each his share, to give them up for the king's benefit, so that they might be forwarded to Madrid entire and without delay, where they would thus see with certainty what sort of a country the expedition had laid hands on, and what recognition had been merited by the army and its captain.

The proposal was unanimously accepted, not without leaving some regret in the inmost hearts

of the soldiery, as greedy as they were valiant, though everybody carried it out nobly. Two agents, of whom Cortez thought himself sure, were commissioned to Spain—Montejo, a former partisan of Velasquez, who had rallied to the fortunes of his new chief, and Puerto-Carrero, a friend of very old date. They were charged with a letter from Cortez to the king, and a statement from the municipal council. What was to have more weight at Madrid, the same vessel bore the articles of gold given by Montezuma, and among them the famous round plate already mentioned, and an alligator's head. Orders were given to make all sail, so as to reach the Peninsula as quick as possible, for nothing could be of more importance than to outstrip the effect of the manœuvres of Velasquez. To aid the vessel forward, Cortez confided the command to Alaminos, one of the most experienced navigators of the epoch. He it was who directed the course of the vessel in which Christopher Columbus embarked on his last voyage, and who was pilot in the voyages of Cordova and Grijalva, the expeditions to which that of Cortez was the sequel.*

* Contrary to the formal orders of Cortez, Montejo fancied himself under the necessity of touching at Cuba, under

Cempoalla was entered a few days afterwards, amid acclamations from the Indian populace. Cortez artfully compromised the cacique with the Aztecs, by getting him to offer an affront, without the ostensible participation of the Spaniards, to the collectors who had come to receive tribute in the emperor's name. He next reconciled him with a neighbouring tribe that was annoying him, and guaranteed him protection against the world. He at the same time set about to convert him. The cacique proposed to marry eight young girls, taken from the most considerable families of his district, to as many Spaniards. Cortez accepted the offer, on condition that they should be baptized, and intimated to the cacique that it was necessary he himself should become a Christian. The Indian wanted to argue, and declared that he

pretext of visiting a property he possessed there, but perhaps in reality to give such information to his former patron, Velasquez, as he might turn to what advantage he could. He was indiscreet enough to unfold all that had occurred in Mexico, which had the effect of greatly increasing the spite and anger of Velasquez against Cortez, and of determining him to send a formidable expedition, so as to crush his *ci-devant* lieutenant, and to substitute himself in his place. Velasquez intended even to stop the vessel, but the order came too late.

would resist all attempts on the images of his gods; he added that, though he might be reduced to passiveness, the gods themselves would know how to execute vengeance. But the Spaniards revolted at the bloody idolatry that met their eyes, and at the cannibal festivals that followed the homicidal sacrifices. They gave vent to shouts of enthusiasm when their general announced that an end must be put to them, for if they bore longer with the spectacle of this devilish worship, God, who alone could cause them to succeed, would withdraw himself from them. They followed Cortez, who rushed towards the temple sword in hand. The cacique called his warriors to arms, and barred the way against the Spaniards with his priests, in their blood-stained robes and hair dishevelled. Cortez made his soldiers seize and surround the cacique, the heads of the priesthood, and the principal warriors of the Totonacs. "You are mad," said he to them; "you have no refuge but in me; for if I abandon you, the hand of Montezuma will soon lay heavy upon you. You must then obey me, and I vow the destruction of your idols." At this suggestion the cacique bowed his head, and, hiding his face in his hands, cried that Cortez might do as he wished, but that the

anger of the gods would be immediately manifested against the profane strangers. Fifty Castillians mounted to the summit of the pyramid, tore down the wooden idols, rolled them on to the pavement, and made a bonfire of them. Instead of unchaining their wrath at this sight, the elements remained unmoved. The sun trembled not, neither did the thunder growl, nor the earth open to give passage to devouring flames. The natives, who looked for an explosion of the fury of the gods, were not merely astonished—they were shaken in their faith. The ascendancy Cortez already exercised on their minds, and the conviction that he alone could shelter them from the vengeance of Montezuma, completed their improvised conversion. The Spaniards, pursuing the labours of their rough proselytism, cleansed and purified the sanctuary of the false divinities, and erected an altar. An image of the Virgin, decked with flowers, was brought thither in procession. Several of the priests of the sanguinary gods of the country joined in the *cortége*, clothed in white. Father Olmedo celebrated mass, and addressed an exhortation to his audience, that was translated for them as he proceeded, and which, according to the chroniclers, drew tears

from all present. Cortez had satisfied the calls of his conscience, and had at the same time assured the fidelity of the people of Cempoalla, who, willing or not, would henceforth have reasons the most powerful for making common cause with him.

His confidence was redoubled. He set out from Cempoalla on his advance to Mexico, in defiance of the prohibition from Montezuma, taking with him four hundred foot soldiers, fifteen horsemen, and seven pieces of artillery. He left the rest of his force at Vera Cruz, as a post for observation seawards, under the command of Escalante, who was devoted to him. Of Totonac warriors, thirteen hundred, soon to be reinforced by others, and one thousand *tamanes*, or porters, in charge of the luggage, were joined to the Spaniards.

The moment having arrived for definitively engaging in his chief enterprise, Cortez adopted and carried out a vigorous resolution. A conspiracy had been concocted by the remnant of the Velasquez party, and by some turbulent characters, of whom there would not be a few in a band like his. Their design was to seize on the whole or a portion of the fleet, and return to Cuba. A circumstance that shows to what

pitch the germs of insubordination had risen, is the fact that one of the two chaplains of the expedition, the licentiate Juan Diaz, a priest inferior in every point to the excellent and worthy Olmedo, was in the number of the conspirators. Cortez discovered the plot, and punished the greater part of its authors. To render it impossible for these attempts to be renewed when his back was turned, he took the determination to destroy his fleet. "Of what good," said he to his confidants, "are these vessels, to guard which will keep unoccupied some of our picked men, such as the sailors, fellows of resource, whose assistance will be so useful to us in coping with the army of Montezuma? To annihilate the fleet is, therefore, to reinforce the expedition. Let us once conquer the Aztec kingdom, and there will be no want of ships to come and reopen the path to their native land, for conquerors covered with glory and laden with gold, if they wish to return there." To have a reply ready for the complaints that would probably be heard from the body of the army when this bold design should be carried into execution, he had a report drawn up by seamen of experience, from which it resulted that the greater part of the ships were not in a condition ever to be fit for

sea again. Fortified with this document, he gave orders for sinking all the hulls, after having taken out the sails, the rigging, and as much of the iron as was possible. One small vessel was saved. The army murmured, but were quieted by the certificate Cortez was prepared with, and by the promise of great deeds, through which every man would ensure his salvation in the next world, and his fortune in this.

CHAPTER III.

WAR WITH THE TLASCALANS, TERMINATED BY AN ALLIANCE.

By the advice of the people of Cempoalla, the Spaniards took their route through the country of Tlascala, peopled by a nation who, in their mountains, had maintained themselves independent of the potent Montezuma; just as the Swiss, after having shaken off the yoke, were in their defiles amid the rocks invincible to the Emperor of Germany, the haughty heir of the Cæsars, notwithstanding all his might and the valour of his men-at-arms. The Tlascalans were nearly of a similar origin to the Aztecs; they spoke a dialect of the same language, and had the same manners and customs, but with less refinement and culture. Like them they were given to the horrible practice of human sacrifice. Notwithstanding all these traits of resemblance, they detested the Aztecs with furious hatred.

They were brothers at enmity. In marching into their country, Cortez was led by the hope of making them his auxiliaries against the Mexican empire; but he had not dreamt of the pride of these mountaineers. They had refused to submit to Montezuma because they were bent on being their own masters. What chance was there that they would accept an authority that was unknown to them?

Now began for Cortez the war of the conquest. Hitherto he had met with obstacles in his way that, one after the other, would have stopped twenty ordinary men. There was the governor Velasquez, in whose despite it had been necessary boldly to set sail, after having provisioned and recruited either unknown to him or in defiance of him. There were the partisans of Velasquez in his own small force, whom it had been necessary to intimidate orgain over, lest their swords should cut through the thread of the Vera Cruz combination, thanks to which he had freed himself from any dependence on the governor of Cuba, by calling into existence a somewhat imaginary *cabildo* (municipal council). He had to bend to obedience men without discipline, got together from all parts, and to watch over the plots they were

prone to form against his authority, and even against his life. It had been necessary to obtain from them that, without reserving anything for themselves, they should abandon to the King of Spain all Montezuma's presents, which were their property. Lastly, he had to put down the murmurings that broke out, at the news of the burning of the fleet, amongst soldiers henceforth separated from their friends, and surrounded by valorous and innumerable enemies. I say nothing of the battles he had to gain against the people of Tabasco. Thanks to his fertility in expedients, to his rare dexterity, to his resolution, to the circumspection in his audacity, to his precocious experience, to the natural ascendancy he exercised around him, to all the eminent qualities united in him, Cortez had surmounted all these embarrassments and trials. It was a matter of intellectual resource and moral strength. But now, to subdue, arms in hand, these brave Tlascalans, who refused to welcome him, or give him a passage, material strength was the thing needed. What was to be done? Nothing was less difficult than for the people of Tlascala to set fifty thousand warriors in battle array; they were all ready; their defiles were easy to guard; their mountainous

territory was rugged and covered with wood, apt for ambuscades: numbers and the ground are in their favour.

The Tlascalans were commanded by young Xicotencatl, not less crafty than bold. A first engagement came off, in which Cortez remained conqueror, but with the perceptible loss of two of his fifteen horses. A few days afterwards there was a still rougher conflict; the battle lasted the whole day; the artillery, the horses, the lances, and the good Toledo sword-blades did wonders. Xicotencatl was forced to abandon the field of battle, but retired in good order. Cortez, whose little army counted many wounded, sent to propose peace. The brave chief replied, at the head of his troops, that the road to Tlascala would not be open to the Spaniards till they were marched to the stone of sacrifice, and that if they remained in their camp he would come and fetch them.

Some days passed away, and there was another battle. The Indians were in great numbers, and full of resentment. Cortez made an appeal to the religious faith of his troops:—"God was with them. God willed that the Cross should be planted in those beautiful regions. How would it be if they gave

ground?" He gave them intelligent instructions how to derive most advantage from their European weapons. The two armies engaged—victory was undecided; when one of the Tlascalan chiefs, who had had a quarrel with Xicotencatl, drew off with his men, carrying another chief with him in his own premeditated flight. The Indian general held his position for four good hours longer, and then beat a retreat without being pursued. Cortez again renewed his proposals of peace. Xicotencatl replied by a night attack. Fortunately, Cortez had accustomed his men to be always in readiness; their arms never quitted them; they slept in order of battle; vigilant sentinels guarded the camp; and, by a happy chance, the night was moonlight. The Tlascalans once more met with a reverse. After this engagement, Cortez, who followed his idea with imperturbability, sent Indians as the bearers of words of peace, no longer to the general enemy, but to the city of Tlascala itself. The proposal was listened to favourably. A solemn embassy was dispatched to find Cortez. The obstinate Xicotencatl retained the members of it in his camp, and prepared to take his revenge. Meanwhile, discouragement had crept in among the

Spaniards. They counted their killed and wounded, and beheld their general smitten with fever. They suffered from the coolness of the night in that elevated part of the country, being compelled to sleep in the open air. They said to each other that the idea of going as far as Mexico was a folly. The Velasquez party again showed itself; and a deputation of malcontents came to lay the grievances of the army before the general. "It may be that nature is against us, but God is stronger than nature," was the reply of Cortez. He quoted to them a verse from an old romance, the meaning of which is, that it is better to die with glory than to live in dishonour. These *grognards* had their mouths stopped; and a little while after, some people of Tlascala made their appearance with white badges, in token of peace. They were bearers of provisions sent by Xicotencatl. Joy spread through the camp. Marina, however, who looked closely at this pretended embassy of peace, warned Cortez that it was a stratagem, and that these *soi-disant* friends were dispatched as spies. Cortez convinced himself of this, and immediately sent back these emissaries with their hands cut off at the wrist. This is what Cæsar did with much greater injustice at the siege of

Alesia to men who were not spies. "Take back word to your general," said Cortez to them, as they were ejected from the camp, "that he may come by day or night, when he will, and how he will, and he will see who we are." Xicotencatl was disconcerted at the sight of his envoys thus sadly mutilated. These extraordinary foreigners knew, then, how to read his thoughts! He began at last to despair of triumphing over the Spaniards, whether by open force or by craft; and he bethought himself of peace. He went in person to proffer assurance of it. Very few days afterwards they set out, all together, in excellent harmony, for Tlascala, where Cortez was received under the roof of Xicotencatl's father; and the completion of the union was cemented in the bosom of a hospitality cordially given and frankly accepted.

It was not precisely personal bravery that gave to the Spaniards victory over the Tlascalans. One of the companions of Cortez affirms that no men could be braver than were these Indians, and that he saw instances of individuals defending themselves against several horsemen. The superiority of their armour, gunpowder, admirable discipline, vigilance beyond compare, and, above all, the genius of Cortez, decided their

success. The horses—a sort of winged monsters, the very sight of which unnerved the most determined of the Tlascalan warriors more than the elephants of Pyrrhus did the Romans—went for a good deal. Cortez had trained his men admirably. He had infused into them his own energy and presence of mind, and had steeled their frames by every kind of hardship. The persevering will of a general operates like a bath in the Styx. By a peculiarity of his temperament, the Spaniard, when animated by a grand sentiment, evinces military qualities that may be sought in vain elsewhere. Let but a great idea take possession of him, and he can do without anything—eating, drinking, or sleeping; he will bear cold or heat, and march for ever on an empty stomach. The soldiers of Cortez were Spaniards of the stoutest stuff. Still, we may believe that what sustained them most and best was the conviction that the triumph of the Cross by their hands was necessary and infallible. They had become persuaded, since the expulsion of the Moors, that the infidels could not resist them. Such was the reply of Marina to a Cempoallan chief, who, in one of the battles with the Tlascalans, said it was all over with him and his; and Cortez, in his addresses to his companions,

when they remonstrated with him on the difficulties that surrounded them, always reverted to the argument that they had the banner of the Cross, whose assistance would suffice for them.

But this robust and indomitable faith, that gave Cortez so much power, and gained him such successes, created dangers for ever leading him on to the edge of the precipice. Once at Tlascala, he asked himself if he could tolerate around him the worship of false gods. His new friends, his allies, whose aid he could not dispense with in his attack on Montezuma, were idolaters; they slaughtered human beings, and held grand festivals, at which they fed on the victims. Were these sacrilegious atrocities to continue their course, and was the Cross to have penetrated Tlascala without purifying it from the stain? Luckily, Father Olmedo checked the hero: "Everything is to be done in its own time," he said; "let us wait the occasion." And, in fact, the occasion soon presented itself; for the Tlascalan chiefs proposed their daughters as wives for Cortez and his officers. Cortez answered that the thing was impracticable, unless Tlascala became converted. He endeavoured to make them comprehend the infinite superiority of the Christian faith. He urged on them that

they were doomed to eternal perdition if they did not shake off their idolatry. A controversy ensued. The Tlascalan senators alleged, according to a formula that was often found on Indian lips, that every one who was content with his gods ought to keep them; that they, the seniors of the nation, would never abjure the worship of the divinities that had protected their younger days; that the abjuration would draw down on the country the anger of Heaven, and would raise the population; for the latter were as jealous of their belief as of their independence, and would shed their last drop of blood for one as for the other.

After the conference, Cortez, whose ardour ill accommodated itself to obstacles, again became a prey to impulses of impatience and irritation, and wanted to give them vent. Father Olmedo renewed his recommendations to temporize. "Patience; what good is there in offering violence to the consciences of these people? Forced conversions are of no value. Though you should overthrow their altars, supposing you are able to do it, the idols will remain in their hearts. Let us use persuasion; if the work is slower, it will be more sure." Alvarado and Velasquez de Leon joined their instances to that of the charitable

and prudent monk. Cortez condescended to tolerance—a prodigious matter for a Spaniard of that day, and a virtue rare among the statesmen of that nation, even at this period of the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was agreed that the Spaniards should practise their religion publicly, but that no constraint should be exercised for the conversion of the inhabitants. A large cross was reared in the centre of Tlascala, surmounting an altar at which mass was daily celebrated. Five or six young girls, of the best families in the republic, were baptized and married to Spanish officers. One was a daughter of the elder Xicotencatl, and sister of the young general who had defended his native soil with so much courage and firmness. She became the wife of Alvarado, for whom the Tlascalans had conceived a deep admiration, and who, from his demonstrative manners, his bold bearing, and his thick fair hair, curling on his fresh-coloured cheeks, had received the name of *Tonatiuh* (the sun). The children of this marriage made alliances with the noblest houses of Castille.

It was fortunate for Cortez that his ardour for proselytism found moderating influences in the prudence of Father Olmedo and the probably worldly views of some of his lieutenants, and that

by their counsels he was induced to adopt a circumspection that was natural to him in all other matters. He would have raised a storm that would have swallowed up himself and his troops, now exhausted, and with their ranks thinned. Had he mastered the Tlascalans, which is not probable, his outrages on the worship of the country would have closed against him the road to Mexico. His enterprise would have failed, and his name would have been mentioned in history as that of a *condottiere* who, by his fanaticism, annihilated the hopes his earlier successes gave birth to. How much is there in a single instant in the life of a great man! How great is the value of good advice, when there is the strength to follow it! A magnificent page in universal history, in imperishable characters, in place of one of those obscure and indifferent references that fall to the lot of adventurers abandoned to the current of their passions.

Once settled down in the right path, Cortez arranged his plan of campaign. He would now go to Mexico; he had a powerful alliance, guaranteed by the inveterate antipathy of the Tlascalans against the Aztecs. He had gained the secret of the weakness of the Mexican empire. He indicated it to Charles V. in one of his letters,

quoting the words of the Gospel, "Every house divided against itself shall not stand." What he learnt at Tlascala confirmed the statement of the Cacique of Cempoalla as to the hatred a portion of the tributary populations of the empire had vowed against their oppressors. Montezuma was detested in the conquered provinces. A liberator who should offer to deliver the peoples from this heavy yoke would, if he were strong, find numerous auxiliaries. The *Conquistador* knew that he would have friends at the very gates of Mexico. The brother of Cacamatzin, King of Tezcuco—Prince Ixtlilxochitl, like himself, a son of Nezahualpilli—driven from his throne by the influence of Montezuma, and reduced to a moderate apanage, was burning to avenge himself; he was renowned for his dashing courage, and he had made an offer of his services to Cortez.

CHAPTER IV.

MARCH FROM TLASCALA TO MEXICO—THE TRAGEDY OF CHOLULA.

At Mexico, meanwhile, the emperor was the prey of cruel perplexity. Though at bottom generous and intelligent, this prince, after having distinguished himself by his bravery, had become, as we have seen, abandoned to the most excessive superstition, and to a bigotry thirsting for blood. It is difficult to imagine what was passing in his mind, because we are so entirely strangers to the ideas that then held sway in Mexico. Superstition, with its extravagances, is like one of those tortuous and gloomy labyrinths in which it is impossible to distinguish the road a man has to follow. What must it be, then, when the blindest superstition takes astrology for an associate? Setting these motives aside, which bar all logic and all regular sequence of

ideas, Montezuma's undecided conduct and the contradictions of his vacillating policy may be explained by saying that he was in turns actuated by an inkling for conforming himself to the prophecies that announced the return of Quetzalcoatl or his race, and by the desire of preserving the empire to himself, in spite of the sacred rights of that venerated deity. As a monarch jealous of his sovereignty, Montezuma dreaded the approach of these strangers, of whom he had received reports calculated to inspire him with the deepest terror. On the other hand, might it not be Quetzalcoatl that had returned, conformably to the tradition, or might he not have sent his descendants? And in that case, was it not incumbent to receive the Spaniards with respect and friendship, under pain of offending those on high?

In the agonies of his indecision Montezuma had, on the arrival of the Spaniards, assembled the grand council of the empire, of which the kings of Tezcuco and Tlacopan formed part. Who were these strangers? What reception was to be given them? Were they, or not, descendants of Quetzalcoatl? Were they men or supernatural beings? They must be men, and there were reasons that would lead to the belief they

were envoys from Quetzalcoatl: they came from the East; they were white, and bearded; they were courageous, nay, invincible. Yet, if they came on the part of Quetzalcoatl, why were they inimical to the gods of the country? Some of the council were inclined to receive them kindly, and among them Cacamatzin, who, as has already been stated, had succeeded his father, Nezahualpilli, on the throne of Tezcuco; but the advice was not to the taste of Montezuma. Finally, the Emperor did not know what to think. He refused both to open his capital to the Spaniards, and to employ open force to keep them at a distance. He had them watched and scanned by his ambassadors. Teuhtlile, the most able among them, had instructions to establish what there was in common between the Spaniards and Quetzalcoatl. Having remarked a gilt helmet on the head of one of the soldiers, like that borne by the image of the god, Teuhtlile asked that it should be given to him, and sent it on in all haste to Tenochtitlan, as a piece of convincing evidence. Meanwhile, Cortez still persisted on personally delivering to the emperor the message he pretended to be the bearer of from his sovereign. He was doing more: he was coming nearer, whilst permission

was being denied him. He was now at Tlascala, among the enemies of the Aztecs. He had shown himself still more redoubtable than had been supposed. It had become difficult not to admit him to the presence, and there was still in reserve the possibility of getting rid of him by some well-conceived treachery. Another embassy then, from Montezuma, came to meet Cortez at Tlascala, laden with presents as rich as those sent before. This time Cortez was invited to go on to the emperor, but was urged not to link himself with the Tlascalans, who, it was said, were barbarians, and fellows of low condition. The route through Chololan, now Cholula, was indicated as the one by which he should proceed to the capital, and he was assured that preparations worthy of him had been made for his reception in that great city.

The Tlascalans, who were thoroughly aware of Montezuma's duplicity, and were even disposed to exaggerate it, urged on Cortez that this invitation covered some stratagem artfully concocted by the Aztec emperor and the priests, and that it was sought to draw him as far as Chololan only to massacre him and his men, by overwhelming them at some moment when they were not on the defensive. Cortez paid little heed

to these warnings. He had acquired the measure of his superiority over the natives, and had small fear of them. He was impatient to see a populous and rich city, of great renown, and from which he was only one day's march; the distance from Tlascala to Cholollan is but from fifteen to twenty miles. It was a kind of holy place, venerated far and wide in Anahuac; pilgrimages were made thither, as the Mahometans go to Mecca, and Christians to Jerusalem or Rome. The city was consecrated to the worship of Quetzalcoatl, who had there the noblest temple in all Mexico, built, like all the temples in the country, on the summit of a truncated pyramid. The traveller of the present day beholds this pyramid on the horizon as he approaches Puebla, on his route from Vera Cruz to Mexico. But the worship of the beneficent Quetzalcoatl had been perverted by the sombre genius of the Aztecs. To this essentially good deity 6000 human victims were annually immolated in his temple at Cholollan. A desire to destroy this infernal worship in its principal seat, and to substitute for it the adoration of the Cross, was, we may be sure, not a stranger to the determination taken by Cortez of advancing to Cholollan. The population must have been then

150,000 at least. Devotion pushed to fanaticism was no impediment to the inhabitants being very industrious, and it was to their proficiency in the useful arts that the city owed its wealth.

The Spaniards found at Chololan an eager, and to all appearance at least, a perfectly cordial welcome. The inhabitants, of a more civilized exterior than the Tlascalans, fêted their guests in a manner that showed their breeding and their wealth. When the soldiers made their appearance, the citizens hailed them with garlands of flowers and bouquets. A great number of priests mingled in the crowd waving their censers laden with perfumes, whilst native instruments of music made the air re-echo with sounds of various melody. The Spaniards were charmed; they admired the cleanness of the city, the width and regularity of the streets, the solidity of the houses, and the number and grandeur of the temples. They took up their quarters in the vast court of the largest of these sacred edifices, and in the surrounding buildings. The inhabitants hastened to bring provisions in abundance, and lavished on their guests every care and forethought. It does not appear that any plot was up to this time in concoction; but, according to the Spaniards, envoys from Montezuma arrived

in a few days, and from that hour all was changed.

These emissaries brought to the chief of the town orders of ill omen. The attitude of the people towards the Spaniards grew visibly cooler. The Cempoalla Indians with Cortez warned him that they noticed hostile preparations. He had taken care to encamp the Tlascalan force that accompanied him outside the city, as he knew their roughness and violence; he felt that contact between them and the people of the place would almost necessarily lead to a conflict in arms. Reduced to the part of observers, the Tlascalans acquitted themselves with their usual prying suspicion. They discovered that a great sacrifice, principally of children, had taken place in one of the suburbs, with the object of insuring the favour of the gods. They brought word of other still more significant facts; many of the inhabitants had left with their wives and children, as if to put them in a place of safety. Lastly, Marina, Cortez's faithful interpreter, had been confidentially informed by the wife of one of the caciques, that a terrible blow was about to be struck against the Spaniards, and she found means of getting acquainted with every detail of the conspiracy. An army of Mexicans, sent by

Montezuma, was, it was also stated, at a short distance from the city, ready to enter as soon as the attack had been begun by the population.

According to the account of the Spaniards and their friends, Cortez employed in this instance every possible means to verify the reports that were brought to him. He obtained an avowal of the plot from two Aztec priests, after having himself interrogated the wife of the cacique, who had made a confidant of Marina. His doubts once set at rest, he took his resolution with his accustomed energy and foresight. He made his dispositions for the very next day. He acquainted the caciques of Chololan that he should evacuate the city at break of dawn, and required them to furnish two thousand porters, or *tamanes*, for the baggage. The caciques then organized their attack for the morrow morning, not without a promise of the men required, whom, in fact, they brought at dawn to the great court in which the foreigners were domiciled. The conflict soon began. The Spaniards, who were perfectly prepared, commenced by massacreing the caciques. The mass of Chololans that attempted to invade their quarters, were crushed under the fire of their artillery and musketry, and the charges of their cavalry. Hearing the reports, the Tlascalans,

who had been left at the entrance of the city, rushed on to the rescue. They fell on men already terror-struck at the thunder of the fire-arms, which they heard for the first time, and at encountering horses, animals just as unknown to them. They could now glut their hatred and vengeance; they slaughtered as long as they could, and then set to work at plunder. The Spaniards, too, after having killed all that resisted, betook themselves to pillage. The unfortunate city of Chololan was thus inundated with blood and sacked. Cortez, however, enjoined that the women and children should be spared, and we are assured that in that he was obeyed, even by his cruel auxiliaries from Tlascala.

Such was the tragedy of Chololan, which is known only from the narrative of Cortez and the Spaniards, or from that of the Indians leagued with him. We must not then flatter ourselves that we know the truth either of the incidents that led to it, or of the events as they occurred. One circumstance, however, is striking: the records of the chroniclers say nothing of what was done during the day by the army of fifty thousand men, according to some, and of twenty thousand according to others, whom Montezuma

had posted near the city, which leads one to doubt the existence of such a force. We better know the final result of this bloody adventure. Montezuma's perplexities, and the secret alarms that weighed down his soul, were redoubled. The Spaniards seemed to him more than ever invincible, and to be extraordinary beings, superior to the human race, let loose upon him by some insurmountable fatality; and he occupied himself the more frequently with the oracles that foretold immense disasters to his empire.

Mexican superstition manifested itself in a strange fashion during this murderous tragedy. The people of Cholollan believed in a tradition, according to which the great temple of their god Quetzalcoatl was to this city a palladium that could not be violated with impunity. It was said that, if any one attempted to demolish it, a river would issue from the foundations that would swallow up everything in its course. When, then, they found themselves closely pressed by the Spaniards, the warriors of Cholollan set to work, with their own hands, to throw down the walls of the temple, hoping that the oracle would be accomplished, and that the river foretold would bubble up from the

ground, and furiously burst its banks, just as the Simois and Scamander issued from their beds when Achilles, victorious, was pursuing the routed Trojans. They would die in the deluge—but that mattered little if the Spaniards were drowned with them. Alas! the stones of the walls were hurled down, but the destroying river came not. They perished not by the outburst of a mysterious flood, but in the flames, which they or the Spaniards lit up in the woodwork of the sacred edifice, while the latter survived triumphant. Hernando Cortez reared a lofty cross on the summit of the pyramid. A Christian altar was erected in what remained of the *teocalli*. And on the same spot now stands a chapel dedicated to Our Lady *de los Remedios*, surrounded with cypress trees, whose age is unknown. An image of the Virgin is preserved there, which, it is asserted, was left by the *Conquistador*. An Indian priest, a descendant of the ancient inhabitants of Cholollan, celebrates the peaceful offering of the mass in the very place where his ancestors shed torrents of blood.

To the praise of Cortez it must be said that, after the victory, he once more showed himself tolerant: he left the inhabitants at liberty to

follow their old religion on condition that they should no longer immolate human victims.

After this signal blow, all the threats, all the intrigues of Montezuma, had no possible effect, and the Aztec emperor could be under no illusion as to the inflexible intention of Cortez. The latter, as soon as he had installed new chiefs at Cholollan, and effaced the more hideous traces of the massacre and pillage that had desolated the city, set out with his own troops and his Indian auxiliaries from Tlascala for the capital of the Aztec empire, the magnificent city of Tenochtitlan.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST ENTRY INTO MEXICO.

I SHALL not dwell in detail on the march from Chololan to Tenochtitlan, though it will be at the sacrifice of a description of populous and well-built cities, of gardens more sumptuous than those of the haughty Semiramis, and of mountains whose defiles recall the enchanted countries of the romances of chivalry. Let us enter the capital with Cortez.

On the day when the Spanish leader made his entrance into Mexico at the head of his troops, Montezuma came to meet him surrounded by a display and an etiquette almost as punctilious as that of Louis XIV. or the Great Mogul. Montezuma was then about forty years of age; his stature was tall and upright, his physiognomy serious, his demeanour full of nobleness tempered by an air of kindness. He pleased his new

guests, and, indeed, neglected nothing to captivate them. When they had all met together again on the same day at the palace the Spaniards were to occupy, the emperor drew from a vase of flowers brought by a slave a large collar, almost all of gold, very artistically worked, and passing it round Cortez's neck, he said—"This palace belongs to you and your brothers; rest from your fatigues; I shall soon come again to see you." In fact, Montezuma did return the same day, still with a *cortége* consisting of some of his principal nobles.

The Spanish leader and the Aztec emperor seated themselves, and entered on serious conversation, interpreted through the medium of Marina, the young and beautiful Indian girl; whilst the Spaniards and the Mexican nobles remained standing in respectful silence. Montezuma addressed to his partner in the dialogue what was to him the grand question—from whence did he come?—who was his sovereign?—and, above all, what motive brought him to Anahuac? The *Conquistador* ascribed his expedition to the desire of seeing a monarch so distinguished, and of making known to him the Christian religion, the only true one there was in the world. Montezuma then put divers other questions, and

terminated the conference by ordering rich presents to be brought.

Behold Cortez, then, in this splendid city, which is surrounded, at a respectful distance, by a screen of mountains. He was dwelling in the palace built by the Emperor Axayacatl, the father of Montezuma, at the foot of the principal *teocalli*. This vast residence, comprising several buildings in one enclosure, sufficed to accommodate the Spaniards, the Tlascalans who had followed them, and the host of servants given them by the Mexican prince. They wanted for nothing, and the inhabitants of the city showed them the greatest respect: for decidedly those could not be men who had put forth such efforts, had surmounted so many dangers, and, without suffering a reverse, had passed through so many snares, and accomplished so many deeds. They must be deities; and they gave them the appellation of *the white gods*. Their leader was admired and feared by all, under the name they bestowed on him of Malintzin.

But Cortez was not the man to be intoxicated by this homage, and to content himself with such an ephemeral kind of success. He kept his purpose always before him, which gave him

an immense advantage over Montezuma, who was on the rack of hesitation. What Cortez wished, with the strong will of a great man, was that Mexico should, at the least, become a country in vassalage to his sovereign the King of Spain, and that the Catholic religion should replace the worship of sanguinary idols. He felt convinced that the power of the Mexican emperor was shaken; the terror that was its foundation had been weakened in proportion as the Spaniards triumphed. Even between Cholula and the capital, Cortez had caught much murmuring against the tyranny the people endured. Notwithstanding, the emperor still preserved great authority. Such was the opinion yet entertained of his power, that at the very gates of Mexico, the Cempoallans, who had till then faithfully followed the foreigner, came to tell him that it was impossible they could pass them and so expose themselves to the anger of the *Great* Montezuma.

The next day, Cortez demanded of the emperor permission to return his visit. This was granted immediately; and, dressed in his handsomest apparel, he went to the palace, accompanied by his principal lieutenants, with a few soldiers by way of escort. The audience was

opened by a long speech from Cortez, the object of which was to convert the emperor by giving him an exposition of the Christian religion, translated by Marina in her best fashion. He drew an outline of the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption. Then going back to the origin of things, he related to the emperor the creation of the world, of Adam and Eve, Paradise, and the Fall of Man. He asserted that the idols adored by the Mexicans were but different forms of Satan; which was completely demonstrated, he said, by the human sacrifices that sullied their temples, and contrasted so strongly with the pure ceremony of the mass. The worship of idols would plunge Montezuma into perdition. It was to save his soul and the souls of his subjects from eternal fire, by revealing to them the true faith, that the Spaniards were come to his empire. He besought the emperor not to lose the opportunity of ensuring his own salvation and that of his people, and conjured him to embrace the Cross, the sacred symbol of the redemption of the human race.

Montezuma listened to the Spanish leader's exhortation attentively to the end, and without interrupting him. He replied briefly that he doubted not the God of the Spaniards was a good

god, but that his gods also had been good to him. He confessed that he found a striking resemblance between what Cortez had developed relative to the Creation, and what he had himself been taught in his childhood. Then, changing the subject, he made a statement in his turn, the substance of which was that from the number of great deeds accomplished by the Spaniards, no less than from the direction in which they had come to his states, it was impossible not to recognise them as the envoys of the divine Quetzalcoatl. The sovereign in whose name Cortez professed to come could be no other than the god himself. As for him he possessed a great empire, which had descended to him from his fathers, with much land, much gold, and much silver; "but," added he, "I recognise that your sovereign, who resides beyond the seas, is the legitimate master of all that I hold. I govern in his name. Since you are his envoy, I will share all these good things with you and your brethren. The palace where you are belongs to you. You shall have all that will be necessary for your wants, and I shall take care that your desires are obeyed in the same manner as my own."

Montezuma's eyes filled with tears as he finished, as if he was conscious of a deep pang in

even nominally consenting to so great a sacrifice. Cortez replied by thanking him for recognising that his sovereign was the divine being he had named, and to reassure him, protested that his master had no intention of meddling in the government of the Mexican empire, and that solely for his own interest did he desire to see him and his subjects converted to the Christian religion. On that and the following days Montezuma loaded all the Spaniards with presents; there was not a private who had not two massive necklaces of gold. Thus, of all the army of Cortez, from the highest of his lieutenants to the meanest foot-soldier, every one expressed himself in terms of respect and gratitude with reference to the Aztec monarch. The whole camp was in good humour.

CHAPTER VI.

MONTEZUMA A PRISONER IN THE SPANISH QUARTERS—HE ACKNOWLEDGES HIMSELF TO BE A VASSAL OF THE KING OF SPAIN.

THE superior mind of Cortez was occupied with thoughts of another kind. The power of the Aztec nation displayed itself before him much greater than he had presumed it to be. It could furnish valiant soldiers in vast numbers; it was fiery, and it had become enraged against the Spaniards. The violent temperament of his companions in arms, raised higher by so many victories, excited by the sight of so much wealth, might at any moment bring on a collision that would be terrible. The rough character of his Tlascalan auxiliaries inspired him with no less disquiet; the latter in effect were detested by the Aztecs, and the feeling was thoroughly reciprocated. They could not keep down the arrogance

with which success had inflated them, and they might in their savage humour be carried to excesses that would put arms into the hands of the Aztecs. No doubt he was in appearance the respected guest of Montezuma, but in reality he was much rather his prisoner, shut up as he was in that immense city, to get out of which would be so difficult; for the streets and causeways were cut by canals that would bar the passage whenever desired, since it required but to destroy or remove the drawbridges with which they were so copiously furnished. And then, while he was remaining with arms folded at Tenochtitlan, at the mercy of any popular rising the Mexican priests should foment, there might arrive from Spain a negative response to his despatches—an ignominious condemnation, the offspring either of the accusations and intrigues of Velasquez, or of the wretched envy vowed by Fonseca, the Director of Indian Affairs, against every man who distinguished himself. Might not even the Governor of Cuba send at any moment a new expedition, that would profit by his forced inaction in the capital to render itself master of the country, and hurl him from his pedestal?

There was then no time to lose. Montezuma was under a charm that must be turned to use.

Such were the reflections that agitated Cortez, after he had thoroughly weighed his true situation in the imperial city of Tenochtitlan, amid all the brilliant homage of which he was the object. It was necessary to strike a great blow; the guest of Montezuma, he must become his master. Cortez trusted to his good fortune. Montezuma should be to the eyes of all the vassal of the King of Spain, with every one of the conditions of subjection plain to the face of day; and he, Cortez, would have a sure pledge for the subordination and obedience of the people: that pledge should be the emperor's person.

But after so many fortunate acts of audacity, this was supreme temerity. Under pretext of perfidious conduct on the part of a Mexican governor, named Quauhpopoca, who a little while before had caused two Spanish soldiers to be slaughtered, Cortez repaired to the imperial palace followed by five or six of his most courageous lieutenants, and concluded an interview with the monarch by requesting that he would accompany them to their quarters. Montezuma refused: it was replied that he must. He offered his children as hostages; he was told that it was himself that was wanted, and the Spaniards laid their hands on the hilts of their

swords. A mad scheme, it will be said! since the palace was filled with guards; the city was crammed with Mexican soldiers ready to fly to arms; Montezuma was all-powerful; as he said to Cortez, he had but to raise his finger and myriads of warriors would rush on his little band of Castillians and their Tlascalan followers. But Cortez, with the glance of genius, saw that his personal ascendancy over Montezuma was even greater than the power of the latter over his subjects. That absolute authority of the Emperor, when he held him in his own hands, would serve as the instrument of his purpose. Montezuma would yield, and would let himself be conveyed to the Conquistador's quarters because he was fascinated; the superstition that showed him in Cortez the representative of Quetzalcoatl, had destroyed in him the notion of struggling against his assailants. He was vain in the highest degree, and therefore he would act as if he went from the sole impulse of his own pleasure. At his court, among his guards, and in his capital, they were tutored to obey him punctually, and with the blindest submission. When therefore he had expressed his will there would be no resistance; but he would be conducted respectfully to the residence that would appear to be his

choice. However, when he ordered his litter, to go and establish himself in the Spanish quarters, the nobles who were the captains of his guard and of his household seemed stupefied, as though they could not believe their ears or their eyes. The crowd in the streets looked on as he passed as if terror-struck at the sacrilege; however, no one stirred; Montezuma repeated that it was his pleasure to go and live among his friends the Spaniards. These last received him at their quarters with an affected respect. His household followed him into captivity with all its state.

Montezuma once in his hands, Cortez let him see that though he was sovereign at Tenochtitlan, he was none the less subordinate to the King of Spain. The unfortunate Quauhpopoca was tried, sentenced, and burnt alive; and while the execution was going forward, Montezuma was placed in irons by the hands of Cortez himself as a felon vassal. He must have been dishonoured in his own eyes from that day. In vain, after the cruel sentence had been carried out, did Cortez again begin to treat him with every exterior mark of respect; in his inmost soul Montezuma felt himself fallen, and his influence among the people was shaken more than ever. Cacamatzin, the

young King of Tezcuco, who was his nephew, and owed his crown to him, openly expressed his indignation, and was organizing resistance. Montezuma enjoined his presence about his person; Cacamatzin replied, that he did indeed reckon on making his appearance in Tenochtitlan, but it would be to renovate religion now degraded, and to restore the renown and the liberty of the empire; that he would come, not with his hands on his bosom in the attitude of a suppliant, but armed at all points, to exterminate these Spaniards who had inflicted such ignominy on the nations of Anahuac. Cacamatzin was prosecuting his intentions, when Montezuma, coupling perfidy with baseness, had him seized at a palace to which he had invited him for a conference, and gave him up to Cortez. A more supple prince was placed on the throne of Tezcuco. Delivered from any embarrassment on that side the *Conquistador*, to whom each concession obtained from Montezuma was but a means for extorting another greater one, required from the unhappy emperor a last sacrifice —the formal recognition of the suzerainty of Charles V., and of himself as his master's lieutenant. One circumstance encouraged him much to venture on this step; from their first inter-

view Montezuma had declared that to him the King of Spain was Quetzalcoatl, and by that title master of the country.

All the chiefs of the empire were convoked, therefore, to a sort of parliament. Montezuma reminded them from his throne of the tradition of Quetzalcoatl. "You recollect (he said) that, on leaving, this deity announced he would return, to resume among us the royal authority. The time foretold has arrived. These White men are come from regions situated beyond the seas, from the quarter where the sun rises, and they claim for their king the supreme power in our country. I am ready to abandon it to them. You who have been my faithful vassals during the long space of time I have occupied the throne, from you I look that you give me this fresh proof of your submission. You will recognise as your master the great prince that reigns on the other side of the ocean; in his absence you will obey the captain he has sent amongst us. The tribute that you brought to me, you will pay to him; the services that you rendered to me are to be now at his disposal." At these words sobs and emotion stifled his voice, and at the example his illustrious audience could not restrain their tears. Every one of them

replied that, as such were his orders, he should be obeyed. The oath of fidelity was taken immediately afterwards. A register of it was drawn up by a notary attached to the expedition, the same who had received and recorded in an authentic form the oath of the Cacique of Cempoalla.

Spaniards were now despatched to collect the tribute from the different provinces of the empire. Cortez had already turned his attention to founding a few important establishments. He had detached a hundred and fifty men, under the command of Velasquez de Leon, to form the nucleus of a colony at a distance from the capital, but not a long way off from Vera Cruz, at the mouth of the Guazacoalco. The best port in all Mexico is to be found there, on the gulf to which it gives name. By ascending that river, Cortez hoped to discover what he called *the secret of the strait*—that is, a natural passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOSTILITY OF THE MEXICANS INCREASES—A RIVAL EXPEDITION, THAT OF NARVAEZ, FURNISHES CORTEZ WITH UNLOOKED-FOR SUCCOURS—THE MEXICANS ATTACK THE SPANIARDS—DEATH OF MONTEZUMA.

All seemed finished. In six months the dream of Cortez appeared to have become a reality; it was not so.

The religious ardour of Cortez, so long restrained, was about to explode, and to create difficulties to which the conflicts with the Tlascalans and Xicotencatl were barely more than play. On the very first day that he beheld Montezuma, Cortez, it will be recollected, spoke to him of conversion, and brought to bear on him, but without success, all his theological knowledge. Visiting a few days afterwards, in company with the emperor, the great temple in

which were collected the sanctuaries of all their deities, at the sight of the human blood that stained them, Cortez apostrophized his imperial host in these terms: "How can a prince so glorious and so wise as you adore these idols, representatives of Satan? Ah! if you would permit us to erect here the Cross, and to place with it the images of the Virgin and her Divine Son, you would see what would become of these gods of abomination." "These gods," said Montezuma, "are those that have led on the Aztecs to victory from their infancy as a nation. They send us seed-time and harvest, and if I could have fancied that you would have been thus wanting in respect to them, I would not have admitted you to their presence." This scene passed prior to Montezuma's captivity. The immediate interference of Father Olmedo quieted Cortez, and temporal cares soon distracted his attention; but when Montezuma had solemnly made his submission to Charles V., the religious zeal of his lieutenant revived with twofold impetuosity. If he had laboured for the crown of Castille, what had he done for the Faith? Should it be said that human sacrifices could now pursue their course with impunity in

a capital that recognised his Catholic Majesty for master?

Followed by his principal officers, Cortez entered the apartment of Montezuma and demanded that he should hand over to the Spaniards, for the exercise of their worship, the vast precinct of the great temple, so that they might invite the entire people to participate in the benefits of Christ's religion. "Why, Malintzin," replied the emperor, aghast, "your requisitions are pushed so far that the anger of our gods will burst out, and my people will rise rather than suffer the profanation of their temple." Indeed, a nation's religion is of all belonging to it that of which the sacrifice is the most painful: so long as a people has faith, the ruin of its religion would be more sensitively felt than would be that even of its nationality. However, after a conference with his priests, Montezuma announced to Cortez that one of the two sanctuaries of the great pyramid would be given up to him. An altar was erected there, on which was reared the Cross; mass was celebrated with great pomp, while the adjoining sanctuary remained consecrated to the frightful worship of the god of war, and re-

echoed at the same instant with the hymns of the indignant Aztecs.

From that moment the aspect of things at Mexico was entirely changed. Till then Montezuma had exhibited extreme affability towards the Spaniards; he had taken pleasure in the society of certain among them, and had entered into their amusements, always leaving them proofs of his munificence. He became gloomy, avoided them, and passed his time in interviews with his principal warriors and the Aztec priests. The population at large ill dissembled their animosity. The emperor sent for Cortez, and told him the gods had made known to the priests that they were incensed, and required, under pain of the greatest misfortunes to the city and empire, that the profane foreigners should be sacrificed on their altars. "You have no chance of safety (he said) but in retreat; depart, go from whence you came; you will be safe at that price alone." Cortez, whose coolness was undisturbed, answered that he did not refuse to quit the country, but that first he must have vessels. The construction of a fleet was therefore set about at Vera Cruz, under the orders of Martin Lopez; but care was privately taken that the

work should go on slowly. In the capital, meanwhile, things were assuming a sadder and more menacing air. On the side of the Mexicans preparations were making for attack; on the side of the Spaniards for defence. Swords would be drawn on the first occasion.

Suddenly news came that a numerous fleet had appeared at Vera Cruz, conveying Spanish soldiery. There were nine hundred of them, of whom eighty were horsemen, as many arquebusiers, and a hundred and fifty cross-bow men; they had also plenty of artillery. This was four times the strength of the Castillian force that Cortez could rally round him at Mexico. The Spaniards uttered cries of joy at the intelligence—they were saved. An illusion! —it was the last blow for Cortez. The expedition came from Cuba, where it had been organized by Velasquez, for the purpose of overthrowing Cortez and seizing on his person. Since the call made by Montejo at Cuba, in defiance of Cortez's prohibition, the marvels that he had related on the subject of Mexico had come to the ears of Velasquez, and had excited his fury beyond all bounds. He exhausted his resources to form an army that Cortez should not be able to resist, and that should conquer

the rich Mexican empire for himself. Such was the expedition that had just landed at Vera Cruz, under the orders of Narvaez, an officer of tried bravery.

Cortez soon decided on his course. He left Mexico with seventy Spaniards, leaving the command there to the valiant Alvarado, recommending to him, what the latter was indeed too ready to forget, prudence and moderation. On his route he picked up a hundred and fifty men whom he had confided to one of his lieutenants, Velasquez de Leon, to found a colony with on the banks of the Guazacoalco, and he marched straight on Narvaez, who kept a bad look-out. After having sent to his competitor Father Olmedo, who was one of his devoted followers, Cortez found means to distribute a little gold and a great many fine words among the army intended for his overthrow, and by a prodigious chance of fortune made Narvaez himself prisoner after a night attack, in which, under favour of the darkness, he caused it to be believed he was at the head of a large force. All the enemy's men, moved by his great deeds, seduced by his exploits, excited by the spoil the Mexican empire promised under such a leader, passed over to his standard, and Cortez proudly

re-entered Mexico. This was on the 24th of June, 1520.

This time, one would have said the populous city was deserted. Not an Aztec showed himself to gaze on the triumphant hero. Along the whole length of the causeways, not a canoe was to be seen on the lake. This was because, to the religious grievances of the Aztecs, Alvarado had added another. By an infamous act of treachery, that individual, who was as covetous and as cruel as he was courageous on the field of battle, had slaughtered the flower of their young nobility, whilst they were celebrating the festival of Huitzilopotchli, the god of war; under the pretext that they were perpetrating heathenish practices, but in reality to seize on the ornaments of gold with which these six hundred young persons were decked for the solemnity. No sooner had Cortez re-entered his quarters than he was surrounded. He had taken the precaution to build two brigantines, so as to have the means of escaping across the lake; but the Aztecs had burnt them.

A furious siege was begun against the Spaniards. A shower of arrows and stones was hailed on all points of the palace of Axayacatl, which served as their fortress. They replied by

artillery and musquetry, that made horrible breaches in the dense ranks of the Mexicans. But what availed it? The assailants were innumerable, and demanded only to die, provided that ten of their lives were exchanged for that of one of *the children of the sun*. Cortez made sorties, in which he had the advantage; but he remained none the less in a state of blockade. The terraces of the houses were crowded with warriors; the bridges of the canals that intersected the streets were removed. "You are ours," cried the Aztecs; "the stone of sacrifice is ready—the knife of the sacrificer is sharpened. The wild beasts of the palace menagerie are roaring with delight, because they scent your flesh which they are to devour. We have cages for the rascal sons of Anahuac that are in your ranks [the Tlascalans], in which we will shut them up and fatten them, that they may be worthy of being sacrificed." Thus saying, they fought with such bravery, says Bernal Diaz, that "several of our men who had served in Italy in *the wars of the giants* against the French, or in the Levant against the Turks, declared they had never seen the like." Montezuma's brother himself commanded the besiegers and he was the bravest of the brave. Happily, Cortez was not a man to

despond or lose courage. He had a body of iron and a soul of adamant. He hoped to compel the Indians to submit by mere dint of carnage. He endeavoured to strike terror into them by war-machines—towers that moved forward, filled with soldiers under cover. He essayed also the path of negotiation, and put forward Montezuma himself as mediator. The unhappy emperor appeared on a terrace of the Spanish quarter, surrounded by his *cortége*. At sight of him, the crowd, accustomed to obey him, at the first impulse bent low. "Are you come to deliver me?" he asked, in the quiet tone of a man accustomed to command. "But I am not a prisoner; I remain here of my own good will, among the White men, who are my guests. Do you come to compel them to withdraw? They are of themselves preparing for their departure." The terms of amity applied by Montezuma to the Spaniards rekindled the fury of the Aztecs. From the moment he styled himself the friend of these profane foreigners, he was but a traitor to the country and to the gods. A flight of stones and arrows was aimed at him. He fell wounded, and died a few days afterwards.

CHAPTER VIII.

CORTEZ EVACUATES MEXICO — SIEGE OF THAT CITY — REVERSES AND SUCCESSES — THE EMPEROR GUATEMOZIN.

This adventure convinced Cortez that the Aztecs would not submit. On the other hand, his provisions were exhausted, and there was but one course left to take—to open a passage for himself at any cost. To get out of Mexico, however, it was necessary to pass through long streets, where the houses had been converted into citadels, and their terraces filled with projectiles and combatants. To the streets succeeded long causeways traversing the lake, which were lined by warriors watching in their canoes among the rushes. More surely to seize on their prey, the Mexicans had destroyed the bridges in their streets, and erected barricades; the causeways, too, were broken. Yet Cortez, by a night march,

regained the main land by the Tlacopan causeway—the shortest of the three. But what a night! In the narratives of the *Conquistadores*, and in the Spanish annals, it is termed the Sorrowful Night (*Noche Triste*). Cortez lost therein the half of his army. All those encumbered with plunder perished, or were taken prisoners—a worse fate, for they would be immolated in sacrifice. The whole of the artillery remained with the Aztecs, who, luckily, had been taught neither the art of using them nor how to manufacture gunpowder. It needed the greatest bravery in this small band of Spaniards to attain the main land, even at the price of so many losses. The very women distinguished themselves, arms in hand. Two heroes were the main authors of the safety of the whole—Cortez first, and then Alvarado, who surpassed himself, to the degree of extorting cries of admiration from the Aztecs. He came dismounted to a place where the causeway had been cut. The horsemen, hustling one against the other, got across by jumping into the lake, and by their assistance a part of the troops also were safe on the other side of the gap. Alvarado was left alone, having stood firm in the rear, to keep the assailants in check. It seemed impossible that

he could escape, when, balancing himself on his long lance, and summoning all his strength, he bounded over the breach at one leap; then with a look he jeered his astonished foes, who exclaimed that he was indeed the beloved child of the sun. This incident is still famous. The spot yet bears the name of Alvarado's Leap, and of all his exploits, this is the one selected to make his name historical. The first lieutenant of Cortez, he who was at a later period the conqueror of the kingdom of Quichua, is spoken of by the chroniclers as Alvarado of the Leap.

Soon after reaching the main land, Cortez met an army that attacked him. Then was fought the battle of Otumba, which he gained after he had fancied, like Cæsar did at Munda, that it was all over, and that nothing remained for him but to die gloriously. From thence he proceeded to refresh his battered forces among the Tlascalans, and to get ready for a return to Tenochtitlan with new resources. I pass over the measures by which he assured himself of the fidelity of the people of Tlascala—the expeditions that re-established among the populations the renown that had been shaken by the *Noche Triste*—the alliances he formed, and the discontents he appeased, as well as the plots among

his own men that he defeated. They constitute, nevertheless, a series of most extraordinary events and incidents. I must at least mention the embassy sent by the Aztecs to Tlascala, for the purpose of entreating those people to coalesce with the whole land of Anahuac in driving out these cruel foreigners, enemies to gods and men, and the debates that then ensued in the Tlascalan senate. They read like grand sittings of the Senate of Rome. Let us again appear with Cortez before Mexico, where he presented himself at the head of an army reinforced by large numbers of auxiliaries, whose equipment he had perfected, and whom he had in various respects brought under severe discipline. A fleet of thirteen brigantines, armed with artillery, was to operate on the lake.

Montezuma's brother, who had succeeded to the empire, had, after a reign of four months, died of the small-pox, which was imported by Narvaez. In the place of Montezuma, choice had been made of his nephew and son-in-law, Guatemozin,* a fine and elegant young man of the age of five-and-twenty, brave beyond all proof,

* I use here the name by which this young hero is known in Europe. His real name is Quautemo, which, with the honorific termination *tzin*, makes Quautemozin.

of uncommon intelligence, and who had vowed implacable hatred to the Spaniards, like that sworn by Hannibal against the Romans at the hands of Hamilcar. Cortez, who had measured the difficulties of his enterprise, and was determined to neglect nothing for its success, established regulations the observance of which he enjoined on his men. This collection of military ordinances has been preserved to us. The supreme object indicated to his companions in arms is the conversion of the heathen. He lays it down to them that their faith and their devotion to religion is the secret of their strength and the condition of their triumph. Otherwise, said he, this war is sovereignly unjust, and all it could procure for us would be wealth ill got. Thence there were rules that, under severe penalties, forbad blaspheming, gambling, &c.—suited to an army of crusaders, and of disciplined crusaders; and, in fact, Cortez believed himself the leader of a crusade as much as Godfrey of Bouillon could have done. On the opposite side, the priests, who had great influence over Guatemozin, preached to the Aztecs that no compromise was possible with these Spanish violators of the temples, and that against them it must be victory or death. As in the "Jerusalem Delivered,"

Heaven is face to face with a pagan Olympus, with fallen angels, companions of Satan—as in the "Iliad," men believed they saw inhabitants of the celestial abode take part with them and descend to join their ranks—so the Spaniards on many occasions were persuaded that they distinguished the Virgin Mary in the sky, or St. James on his white horse, or St. Peter, the patron of Cortez, alongside of them.

On either hand the multitude of combatants was beyond numbering, for Cortez had as many as 150,000 auxiliaries; on both sides there was extraordinary devotedness and prodigious ardour. The Aztecs defended themselves like a people fighting for their hearths and their altars. The Spaniards demeaned themselves at once like men predestined to carry out a decree of Heaven, and like men filled with ambition, who had to conquer riches and distinction at the point of the sword. The Indian auxiliaries sought to gratify ancient resentments, and to inflict retaliation; they were anxious to exterminate former masters, who, if not destroyed, would annihilate them. Victory was undecided more than once. Notwithstanding the barbarous courage of the Tlascalans, and the bloodthirsty valour of Ixtlixochitl, prince of

Tezcuco, it was the intrepidity of the handful of Spaniards, and often even the personal bravery of Cortez, that determined success when victory fell to the Christian standard. There was fighting by land and by sea, at a distance and hand to hand, by day and by night, on the platforms of the pyramids, on the terraces of the houses, on the muddy shores of the lake. Stratagem was resorted to as well as audacity, and Guatemozin succeeded in more than once placing the *Conquistadores* in peril. Cortez had already run great danger in the Sorrowful Night. At the attack on Xochimilco (*the Field of Flowers*), one of the cities in the valley, he was for an instant prisoner. It had been all over with him, if the Aztecs had not been bent on reserving him for a solemn sacrifice. A Tlascalan and two of his own servants rescued him. The next day inquiry was made for the Tlascalan warrior, that he might be rewarded; but in vain; and it remained the belief of the army that it was St. Peter in person who, so disguised, had come to the general's assistance.

At the more than pressing solicitation of his companions, who were suffering from the rains and from want of provisions, Cortez at last decided on proceeding to a general assault. "We

are left (said the soldiers) exposed to all the hardships of the weather, and a prey to famine, when a *coup de main* would be so easy against these heathens. Did we not the other day penetrate by sheer force into the heart of the city, to the palace of the emperor, and to that temple where Satan is adored under the name of that infamous idol, Huitzilopotchli? Could we not then have set fire to that abominable sanctuary and to the palace, and have thrown from the top of the pyramid those ferocious priests that people the den? Let us finish with it by an assault?" "You shall have an assault," answered the general, moved by their murmurs.

In the end, it was agreed to attack in two distinct columns. Alvarado commanded one, Cortez the other. The advance was made after celebration of mass. Cortez formed his corps into three divisions, whom he moved forward each by a separate street, recommending circumspection to the leaders of the two from which he was separated. The Aztecs beat a retreat; the Spanish division, led by the Treasurer Alderete (for in this expedition the very financiers were heroes), and that at the head of which the general had placed Andrés de Tapia and Alvarado's brother, pressed them closely. At last

the centre of the city was reached—the great market-place, where they were desirous of establishing themselves—and the cry of "victory" was raised. On a sudden, the horn of Guatemozin was heard from the summit of a *teocalli*. At this signal the Indians faced about; others, occupying the houses, were seen on the terraces; the side streets were filled with warriors, who were issuing also from the rushes on the lake, to the right and left of the causeway. They threw themselves with fury on the Spaniards and their auxiliaries. The ranks were thrown into disorder, and the artillery could no longer act: it was a frightful *mêlée*. Numbers of the Spaniards were taken or killed; Cortez himself, wounded, was seized on by six foes of athletic form, who, seeing him almost alone, rushed on with frenzy, shouting, "Down with Malintzin!" Once more, however, was he torn from the grasp of the enemy; but the horn of Guatemozin, that seemed, like Astolpho's, to exercise a magic influence, continued to sound, and the impetuosity of the Aztecs went on increasing. They threw to the feet of Cortez several Spanish heads, crying, "Behold Tonatiuh" (the name, as before stated, which they had given to Alvarado). "There's Sandoval" (the most cherished friend

of Cortez). To scatter terror among Alvarado's column, they in similar fashion threw before them heads of individual Whites, calling out the name of Malintzin. Fortunately neither Alvarado nor Sandoval had fallen, any more than the general. The Spaniards, however, were completely routed; they with difficulty gained their entrenchments, and in the evening, at sunset, they could contemplate with horror the dreadful ceremony going forward on the top of the great *teocalli*.. Their captive brothers in arms were slaughtered before the statue of the god of war; and their bleeding bodies, thrown from the summit of the pyramid, fell amid the mob, who fought for their limbs as choice dishes for a detestable banquet.

Guatemozin's victory diffused immense enthusiasm among the Aztecs and those who remained united to them. The priests proclaimed that the gods, satiated by the sacrifice of the Spanish prisoners, had promised to rid the country of the foreigners, and that the promise would be fulfilled within eight days. This intelligence spread alarm among the allies of the Spaniards. They deserted in great numbers—not to go over to the Aztecs, whose anger they dreaded, but to return to their homes. Cortez

had good watch kept in the camp. The sorties of the besieged were repulsed; the eight days passed without the Spaniards having lost more than a few marauders. The allies, seeing that the oracle was wrong, came back to their former friends. The aggressive ardour of the besieged grew cooler, and they soon found themselves assailed by the plagues that ordinarily attack troops massed in a city—not only famine, but epidemic diseases, the result of want and overcrowding. From excitement many passed to discouragement; they with despair beheld their former vassals demolish all those quarters of the city that were in the power of Cortez, the buildings in which he ordered to be razed to the ground, so that the sorties of the Aztecs were of no possible advantage to them.

CHAPTER IX.

MEXICO TAKEN—GUATEMOZIN—SEQUEL AND END OF THE CAREER OF CORTEZ.

CORTEZ, who had formed his own opinion as to the position of the Aztecs, despatched to Guatemozin three chiefs who had been taken prisoners. He conjured him to submit, promising that he should still wear the crown, that the Aztecs should retain their properties and dignities, under the suzerainty of the King of Spain. The young emperor received the envoys with distinction, and listened attentively to their message. Probably because he was not yet sufficiently master, he remitted it to a council composed of the principal chiefs of the army and other persons of the highest consideration. Some of them advised that the proposals of Cortez should be entertained; but the priests, who perceived that under the Christians their influence would be

destroyed, were of an opposite opinion. "Peace (said they to the emperor) is a great blessing, if it be not with the White men. There has not been a single promise they have not violated. Their cupidity is unbounded, and who can reckon up their outrages on our gods? Let us trust to the divinities that have so long been the protectors of our nation. Is it not better to die than to live slaves of these lying and impious foreigners?" Guatemozin was inflamed by their eloquence. "Well," said he, "we'll die fighting; woe to him who speaks of surrendering!" As an answer to the offers of the Spaniards, two days afterwards Guatemozin ordered a general sortie, which, however, was unsuccessful. The Aztecs were driven back, and further straitened for room. Famine pinched them more cruelly day after day. Lizards and such rats as they could find were their richest nourishment; reptiles and insects were eagerly looked for, trees stripped of their bark, and roots stealthily sought after by night. Meanwhile, Cortez, seeing there was no other means of bringing them to submission, pursued the work of destruction he had resolved on with so much regret; the pyramids of the gods and the palaces of the great were razed equally with the huts of rushes inhabited by the

populace. This demolition was accomplished by the hands of his allies, amid threats from the Aztecs like these—"Wretches! the more you demolish, the more you will have to build up, for if we are the conquerors, we will have a capital as magnificent as before, and if the White men carry the day, they will be more exacting than we are." Notwithstanding the bitterness of their sufferings, these valiant Aztecs kept a good front. They replied with haughtiness and disdain when they were told of their wants, and an Indian chief attached to Cortez having, at one of the conversations that often occurred in the interval between assaults and sorties, taunted them with being at the last extremity, they threw cakes of maize in his face, telling him they had food for themselves and others too.

Nevertheless famine and disease were decimating them. They could be seen wasting away on their terraces or behind their barricades. Heaps of bodies were found in every street that was won from them; this people, so punctilious in their customs of sepulture, had ceased to bury their dead. Women and children were left in the houses, reduced to skeletons, and unable to drag themselves off, for all that were able to walk had concentrated them-

selves in the quarters that still resisted. In this sad situation the Spaniards were more than once reproached with not bringing matters to an end. "You are not the children of the Sun, for he is swift in his course, and you are slow in your destruction. Finish us, then, that we may go to our god Huitzilopotchli, who will recompense us for all we are suffering for him." At other times they scoffed at the Spaniards, telling them they would look in vain for treasure, for everything had been buried in places of which they would never have the secret. And to talk to them of surrendering was worse. Cortez, having sent in to Guatemozin a prisoner of high rank, to press him to treat, we are told that the latter consigned the envoy to the stone of sacrifice.

Soon there was left to the besieged but one quarter, and that the most incommodious of all, forming barely an eighth of the city, where there were not houses enough to give them shelter. Many had to live night and day in the open air on board boats, amid the reeds on the lake. Cortez daily acquired further proofs of the extremity to which they were reduced. They had supported themselves for some time by devouring the prisoners taken in their sorties.

Even of that resource they were at last deprived. They were then to be caught prowling in the night for scraps that obscene animals would have disdained, or to snatch a few handfuls of grass; and it is even told that mothers were seen to slaughter their children for the purpose of eating them. Diseases, produced by the foulness that impregnated the air, carried off those that escaped famine and the sword. Cortez was seized with pity, and gave the most formal orders that all should be spared who committed no aggression. But what means had he of enforcing obedience on his allies, the implacable Tlascalans and the other former vassals of the Aztec emperors, who had their revenge to wreak? At the same time he renewed his efforts to obtain from Guatemozin his submission. At the instance of the chiefs about him, the young monarch, who could no longer be under any illusion as to the chances that remained for him, at last consented to an interview. The meeting took place in the vast market-square, on an extensive platform, that used to serve for popular representations. Cortez had it carpeted, and got ready a banquet, at which he thought of intreating his valiant enemy to satisfy his hunger. Guatemozin did

not appear at the appointed hour—whether it was that he feared his person would be seized, and that the fate of Montezuma, reduced to be the mere passive instrument of foreigners, seemed to him the greatest of misfortunes; or whether the priests, maintaining their ascendancy to the last, had determined him to further resistance. The *Conquistador* retained to dinner the famished bearers of Guatemozin's refusal, and sent them back with provisions, and his compliments to their master, reiterating his demand for a conference. The haughty Mexican returned present for present; the very same individuals came back to the Spanish camp laden with exquisite cotton cloths—but alone, without the emperor. Cortez made still more pressing appeals, so that a promise was brought him next morning of a visit from Guatemozin at noon. Another disappointment; and it was perceived that in their place of refuge, so crammed with the dead and dying, the besieged were silently preparing for a last effort. On the following day there was again a battle, or rather a slaughter. The auxiliaries of the Spaniards, penetrating into the quarter occupied by the besieged, put to death thousands of the Aztecs, without distinction of age or sex. Their sangui-

nary fury excited the indignation of Cortez, who, giving an account of the scene to his master, says: "The cries of the women and children, murdered one after the other, were so lamentable that there was not a man amongst us whose heart was not rent. . . . . Never was there such cruelty seen [as that of the allies]; never did beings in human form show themselves such strangers to humanity." And yet on the morrow, after a night passed in this scene of disaster, Guatemozin again refused to surrender, or to come and treat with the Spanish commander.

The 13th August, 1521, had now arrived, and that was to be the last day of this once flourishing empire. Before making a final assault, Cortez once more invited the emperor to his presence. His envoys came back with the *cihuacoatl*, a magistrate of the first rank, who declared, with an air of consternation, that Guatemozin knew how to die, but that he would not come to treat. Then, turning towards Cortez, he added: "Do now whatever you please." "Be it so," replied Cortez; "go and tell your friends to prepare; they are going to die." In fact, the troops advanced; there was a last *mêlée*, a last carnage, on land and on the

lake. The jaded Mexicans drew from their despair, their patriotism, and their attachment to their gods, strength still to combat with heroism. Guatemozin, driven to the shore of the lake, threw himself into a canoe with a few warriors, and endeavoured to escape by dint of rowing; but he was pursued by a brigantine of the Spanish fleet, taken, and brought to Cortez, who received him with the respect due to a crowned head. Advancing with dignity along the terrace prepared for this melancholy interview between a captive prince and his conqueror, he said: "I have done all that I could, Malintzin, to save my crown and my people. You see to what I have now fallen; do with me what you will." And, pointing with his finger to a dagger borne in the general's waist-belt, he continued, with vehemence: "Draw that weapon, and make an end of me." "No," replied Cortez, "you will be treated with profound respect. You have defended your capital like the bravest of princes; Spaniards know how to honour valour even in their enemies." He then inquired after the empress, who was a daughter of Montezuma, sent an escort to find her, and ordered a repast to be served to his august prisoners. The Aztec empire had ceased

to exist; Spanish sway was established in Mexico. The Cross was triumphant in that fine country, and there was no sharer in its reign.

The number of persons that perished in the siege has been differently estimated. The most moderate calculation puts it at 120,000 on the side of the Aztecs. Very many Indians fell on the side of the besiegers. The historian Ixtlixochitl says there were 30,000 dead of the warriors of Tezcuco alone. All that were left alive of the Aztecs were, at the request of Guatemozin, allowed to leave the city in freedom, on the morning after it was taken. Never was there a sadder spectacle than this evacuation. The warriors still surviving were in number 30,000 according to some, and 70,000 according to others. They marched out with hosts of women and children, all wan and desolate. They took three days in defiling by the different causeways. They halted several times after they had quitted the city, before definitively leaving it behind them, either that their exhausted strength commanded them to take rest, or that they desired to cast a last glance on the ruins of the magnificent city that had been the seat of their dominion. When they had said a final farewell to the wreck of their capital, they

dispersed in all directions, everywhere spreading a terror of the Spaniards, and the feeling that to resist them was impossible. That conviction must have been established speedily and firmly, for there was no further attempt at resistance, unless it were at one point, in the territory of Panuco, near the Atlantic Ocean. There the natives rose and massacred a body of Spaniards sent thither by Cortez; but they were punished so promptly and with such severity that no one dared to renew the crime. As soon as he was master of Tenochtitlan, Cortez witnessed the appearance of emissaries from the different provinces, who came to confirm with their own eyes the catastrophe of the Aztecs, and to bring him assurances of their submission. Of these various embassies, the most important was that from the King of Michoacan, who was at the head of a great territory, where he had remained independent of Montezuma. The king afterwards arrived in person to contemplate the ruins of Tenochtitlan, and to solicit the protection of its invincible conquerors. Michoacan was situated to the north-west, between Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. The submission of this king gave Cortez an opportunity of getting what information he could as to the coast on

that side. A few years later it was the object of an expedition, led by himself in person, which he pushed as far as California.

Cortez deserves there should be rendered to him the justice of admitting that, the city once gained, he renewed his orders for sparing the vanquished. After their departure they were not molested. But about the same time the cupidity of the Spaniards suffered a bitter disappointment, that impelled them to deplorable excesses. The gold got out of Tenochtitlan was almost insignificant in comparison with what had been hoped for, and with what it seemed there ought to be. It is probable the Aztecs had executed the threat they several times made during the siege, of hiding their gold so well that the victors would never be able to find it. There is reason to believe they threw a portion of it into the lake, and buried the rest. The irritated soldiery indulged in violent talk, and accused their general of having appropriated a large share of the booty to his own benefit. They covered the walls of their quarters with inscriptions, in which these accusations were repeated. Guatemozin, whom Cortez had retained near him, replied to questions on the

matter, that there existed no place of concealment in which the gold of the Aztecs had been deposited in such a way as that it could be recovered. It was then asserted that Cortez had come to an understanding with him on the language he was to hold. The treasurer Alderete, from greed or from an intemperate zeal for the interests of the king, to whom devolved the *quint*, or fifth of the spoil, incited the soldiers to demand that Guatemozin should be put to the torture, to make him declare where he had hidden his treasures. Cortez, who admired the unfortunate monarch, and had promised him his protection, at first resisted; but at length he committed the fault of yielding, and of giving way to the shameful outrage insisted on by the soldiery. Guatemozin was handed over to these rough men, clamorous for gold at any price, even at the price of their honour. It was the same with the King of Tacuba; both became the victims of cruel tortures, to make them speak. Their feet were put in the fire after being rubbed with oil. The reply given by the generous and valiant Guatemozin to the companion of his misfortune, on his uttering lamentations whilst they were both in the hands of their

executioners, is still classical as a trait of heroism.*

Ashamed of the part he was made to play, Cortez put a stop to this cowardly malice against a deposed sovereign; the torture ceased; but it is a stain on his reputation that it ever began. These indignities towards Guatemozin and the former King of Tacuba were without result. The young emperor had probably said all that he knew when he made known what everybody suspected before the torture, that a large quantity of gold had been thrown into the lake. Researches were made there, but they were unproductive. In a piece of water in Guatemozin's gardens, a golden sun, of great weight, was discovered; but what was that in proportion to what was looked for? In the anguish of torture, the Cacique of Tacuba declared that there was gold buried at one of his country-houses. He was taken there, but, when arrived, he said he had made the declaration only to be conveyed to his old residence, trusting to die on the road (no

* The version in most currency, which makes him say, "And am I upon roses?" does not appear to be exact. According to the best evidence, he said, "And am I taking my pleasure in a bath?" The words are not the same, though the sense is alike.

doubt, by the hand of the Spaniards on his return).

The indefatigable Cortez busied himself without delay in the organization of his conquest. He sent out detachments in the principal directions. He rebuilt Tenochtitlan, henceforth called Mexico, on the site of the former city, and in grand style. He sent two officers in his confidence to Charles V.—Quignones, who had saved his life in battle, and Avila—with gold and a number of articles of curiosity.*

In the end, Cortez triumphed at the court of Madrid over the intrigues of Velasquez, but not without considerable difficulty. At one moment, indeed, he was under condemnation. The unworthy Fonseca, the natural enemy of all superior men, enraged at the loss of Cortez, as he had been at that of Columbus and Balboa, had, on the 15th April, 1521, obtained from Cardinal Adrian, the former preceptor of Charles V.—who was the substitute for that

* They touched at the Azores, where Quignones perished in a quarrel. Avila re-embarked, but was taken at sea by the French, with all he was the bearer of. Francis I., to whom the captured articles were sent, was struck with admiration. Avila was able to save the despatches entrusted to him, and to get them conveyed to Charles V.

prince in Spain, under the title of Regent—a signature to an ordinance that recapitulated the faults, real or supposed, of Cortez, and prescribed that a commissioner should be dispatched to Mexico, charged to draw up a report on the conduct of the *Conquistador*, with power to suspend him from his functions, and even to seize on his person and effects. The commissioner chosen was an inspector of mines in St. Domingo, named Christoval de Tapia, a man of subaltern position, weak in character and intellect, and already known to Cortez. This emissary landed at Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz in December, 1521, some months after the conquest was a *fait accompli.* Those in command at Villa Rica were men devoted to Cortez, who haggled over the terms of Tapia's commission. On his part, Cortez wrote him a very polite letter, in which he congratulated himself on again meeting with an old friend; but he so arranged matters that the commissioner, in spite of all the powers with which Fonseca had invested him, was unable to penetrate into the country, or to get his authority recognised by anybody.

When Cortez saw that he was embarrassed and disgusted, he sent to offer him a very large price for everything he had brought with him—

horses, equipages, and slaves. The commissioner resigned himself to the exchange of the power he was forbidden to exercise for the gold he was sure to obtain; and he returned to Cuba with his pockets full. In the meantime, the friends whom the family of Cortez possessed at court laboured to disabuse the Cardinal Regent of the unjust prejudices Fonseca had inspired him with against the *Conquistador*. The Duke de Bejar, a person of consideration, acted a part in the matter that did him the highest honour. Don Martin, the father of Cortez, himself a man highly esteemed, had his share in this rehabilitation of his son at court. Fonseca received orders to abstain from anything that touched the interests of the hero to whom Spain was indebted for so important a conquest. Thus, the decision of the 15th April, 1521, was revoked. Whilst this was being effected, in July Charles V. returned to Spain. He immediately constituted a commission that was to render him a detailed account of the affair, and to propose to him a definite solution. The chances were better for a great man with this prince, and under his inspiration; and, indeed, on the 15th October, 1522, he signed a document at Valladolid that did full justice to Cortez.

The latter was appointed governor, captain-general, and grand judge of the colony; thus uniting in himself the civil, military, and judicial powers. Rewards were given to the officers and the army; and an autograph letter from the emperor recognised and lauded their services. Fonseca was forbidden to meddle with the affairs of New Spain.*

Meanwhile Cortez was labouring to extend the limits of his conquest. The most important expedition he organized was the one directed to Central America. This was confided to Alvarado, who took possession of all the country now forming the State of Guatemala. Another, of which Olid was leader, was to march into the same regions, but more to the eastward, into what now constitutes the State of Honduras. This officer manifesting an intention to make himself independent of Cortez, the latter, notwithstanding the distance, resolved to go thither in person, with a chosen body of men; taking with him Guatemozin, whom he wished to have always under his hands, because he dreaded him as the possible centre of an insurrection of the Aztecs. This little force arrived at its destina-

* He died of chagrin before a year had rolled over.

tion after a long march and incredible fatigues. It was found that the insubordination of Olid had been suppressed, and that he himself had been beheaded by the order of another officer, whom Cortez had despatched on the first information. An act of cruelty was committed amid the dangers and sufferings of this painful march, with the sanction of Cortez, and under his eyes. Guatemozin was tried, condemned, and executed, for meditating a plan of revolt. He was hanged on a tree with two other chiefs, one of them being the former King of Tacuba, who was tortured at the same time with him in Mexico. Everything leads to the belief that the ex-monarch of Mexico was innocent. Such is the opinion of Bernal Diaz, who was one of the expedition; and that chronicler adds that all his companions in arms considered the condemnation of the young hero to be unjust. The execution stands as a blot on the memory of Cortez. What aggravates the crime is, that it was signalized by a refinement in barbarity. Guatemozin and the two caciques were hung by the feet, that their deaths might be slower and their agony more excruciating. Cortez was in danger at the moment; his men were in want of sustenance: they were lost in the woods, and if the Indians

forming part of the expedition had not, it is urged, been restrained by this terrible act of authority, they might have turned on the Spaniards. It is probable that some of the persons who lived in intimacy with Cortez felt that misgiving, and communicated it to him. But were there grounds for the presentiment? Did not the counsel that may have been given to Cortez to get rid of Guatemozin emanate from that unlucky zeal so readily displayed by those who surround sovereigns and persons in power, which is an effect of narrowness of mind or baseness of heart? History can scarcely accord to great men, that permit themselves to be thus led on to evil, the benefit of extenuating circumstances, such as the suspicion made to hover on the head of the unfortunate Aztec; for the appellation "great" to be bestowed on them without reserve, they must have been capable of supporting the weight of their position even when at the heaviest, and they must have resisted the culpable suggestions of pretended friends just as well as the shock of events.

Scarcely had Cortez returned to Mexico from his expedition to Honduras, which took him a couple of years, than he was informed of the

approaching arrival of one of those High Commissioners whom the Court of Madrid used to send from time to time to its immense possessions beyond sea, to examine how they were administered, and who, the better to make their examination, took possession even of the government. The intrigues against him had gained the ascendant. This time, however, the commissioner or judge was Ponce de Leon, a man of great personal distinction. He was the bearer of an autograph letter from the emperor to Cortez, intended to soften the blow. Unfortunately, Ponce de Leon, who arrived in July, 1526, fell a prey immediately afterwards to malignant fever. On his death-bed, he delegated his authority to a subaltern, an old busybody without discernment, whose appointment was confirmed by the Court of Madrid, and who, infatuated with his sudden importance, seemed as if bent on making himself offensive to Cortez. The latter decided on going in person to explain his conduct to Charles V., who, on his side, moreover, summoned him to court to confer, he said, on grand projects in reference to the Indies, and to confer on him a recompense proportioned to his services. In reality, there were fears at Madrid

that Cortez intended to make himself independent. The emperor was full of courtesy to the great man to whom he was under such an amount of obligation. Cortez remained at court, overwhelmed with attentions by his sovereign. Charles paid him a visit while he was suffering from fever—an incident referred to by the historians of the time as a favour after which the emperor might have considered himself quits with his servant. Charles V. was not of that opinion. He made him Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, and attached to the title very extensive domains, containing twenty towns and villages, and 23,000 vassals. Other possessions also were attached to the dignity. The deed conferring on Cortez the lands of the valley was couched in the most flattering terms. His fidelity and loyalty were exalted in it, and he was praised for the services he had rendered to the Crown of Castille and to the Catholic faith. But Charles V. had resolved never to re-establish Cortez in the government of Mexico. All that he could obtain on that score was, to be nominated Captain-general of the conquered country, and of the coasts of the Southern Sea; that is to say, the military authority was confided to him,

to the exclusion of political, civil, and judicial functions.

Cortez decided on returning to Mexico in that capacity. He there endured a number of vexations at the hands of other persons in high position, who permitted themselves to be actuated by a miserable envy. He consoled himself for them by adding value to his estates from the excellent cultivation, of modes and kinds new to the country, that he introduced there; and still more by organizing voyages of discovery and conquest to the still unexplored portions of the shores of the Southern or Pacific Ocean. But even there his designs were thwarted by the *Audiencia*, or superior tribunal, that was for the time the depository of government, and by a functionary named Guzman—a type of that venomous jealousy that dogs the footsteps of great men. This did not prevent his discovering California; and on the Spanish maps his name is attached to the gulf that separates peninsular from continental California. The expedition, however, was unfortunate. Cortez and his companions had all a narrow escape from perishing by shipwreck. Cortez spent on this expedition 100,000

castellanos,* and brought back not the value of a single piastre. It may be said that he at least gained an increase of renown. This was the last of his American efforts. During the voyage, the first Viceroy appointed to Mexico arrived in the capital, and Cortez purposing to renew his researches in the same quarter, this

* It is not always easy to assign the value that would be represented in our days, weight for weight only, by the sums mentioned in authors, even when the writings in which the sums occur are but a few centuries old, so great is the variation in monies. There is reason to believe that the *castellano* and the *peso de oro* before mentioned were one and the same thing; but how much gold did they contain? I have quoted the most recent estimate, that of Prescott, according to which the *peso de oro* or *castellano* would be equal to 2*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* in our modern sterling coin. According to that reckoning, the 100,000 castellanos spent by Cortez on the expedition to California would make, weight for weight, 262,500*l.* But the estimate considered most probable by Humboldt is very much less, reducing the 100,000 castellanos to 62,320*l.*

All the gold found at Tenochtitlan after the siege amounted, according to Cortez, to only 130,000 castellanos, or, following one valuation, to 341,250*l.*, and by the others to 82,400*l.* But the precious metal then contained in the same weight a value at least quadruple that it would contain at the present day. Bernal Diaz makes the gold at Tenochtitlan 380,000 castellanos—about three times as much as stated by Cortez.

high dignitary forbad his departure, because a monkish traveller had told him that Eldorado was in that part to which Cortez intended to proceed; and from that moment he thought he was bound to reserve the right and the profit of the discovery to himself. The monk had told the truth without suspecting it, as we came to know in 1848, when the gold-mines of California were brought to light.

The career of Cortez in America terminated after this quarrel with the viceroy. He returned to Spain, from whence he was no more to set out for the New World. He took part, rather as a simple spectator than one of the leaders, in the unfortunate expedition of Charles V. against Algiers in 1541. In the tempest that destroyed a portion of the fleet, he saved himself by swimming, losing the precious stones of inestimable value that he had selected out of Montezuma's treasures. At a council of war held by the emperor after the hurricane, it was decided to give up the undertaking. Cortez, upon whom the affront had been passed of not being invited to the council, gave vent to warm indignation at this intelligence. He engaged to take the place, if the command were conceded to him. He was

listened to as an impertinent dreamer. His credit at court went on declining from that moment. He was treated as a troublesome personage, and died, worn out with vexations, on the 21st December, 1547, in his sixty-third year.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO CONSIDERED IN A DRAMATIC POINT OF VIEW, OR AS THE SUBJECT FOR AN EPIC.

THE narrative of the conquest of Mexico resembles an epic poem, or a romance of chivalry, the events and even the incidents are on such grand proportions, the actors exhibit themselves so far above the ordinary stature, the marvellous itself has so large a share in it. We behold an adventurer who, setting out from Cuba with 553 soldiers, 110 sailors, 16 horses, 13 arquebusiers (musqueteers), 32 cross-bow men, 10 pieces of cannon, and 4 falconets (smaller cannon), dares to attack an empire in which everything soon reveals to him that the population is full of bravery, and the sovereign of which makes the world at a distance tremble at a sign, and can, it is said, on an appeal to his vassals, put millions

of men under arms. Cortez does not propose to himself simply to make Charles V. be recognised as their suzerain by the inhabitants of this formidable empire and its haughty emperor—he forms the resolution of compelling them to abjure their religion; in other words, to make the very greatest sacrifice that can be demanded from a people. He resolves it, he essays it, and he takes but thirty months to succeed in it.

By side of such a subject the groundwork of the "Iliad" appears exceedingly mean. What is it, indeed, but the quarrel and reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon, with an action that cannot be termed final, for it finishes nothing, in which the principal of the defenders of Troy is vanquished and killed by the most valorous of the Greeks? The "Æneid" is not founded on larger bases: two chiefs of tribes, Æneas and Turnus, with forces almost equal, dispute the hand of the daughter of a petty King of Latium. In each of these imperishable *chefs-d'œuvre* the poet was driven to draw from his own imagination for the marvellous with which the adventure is so admirably set off. It was necessary to add the fable to a meagre reality; it was needful, with infinite art, to interlard the narrative with historical traditions, geographical descriptions,

and notions of the most advanced philosophy of the time. On this account, the "Iliad" and "Æneid" are encyclopedias of those two important epochs in the annals of the human race in which they were written—but encyclopedias of the most attractive form, put together by the hands of men of the rarest genius and the greatest knowledge. They present a wonderfully animated picture of the creeds and opinions, of the acquirements and usages, of the manners and arts of two peoples of peculiar mark, from whom we derive our civilization, and to whom we feel ourselves linked as by an umbilical cord. Thence it is, much more than from the positive substance of their subject, that they seize, so to say, on mind and soul, and that they stand monuments immortal for the people of existing Europe, and for their offshoots, wherever scattered through the entire world. "Jerusalem Delivered" relates the encounter of two masses, in this instance considerable, but of almost equal power. The Faith is triumphant, because it is the Faith—doubtless, a just conclusion, but too clearly foreseen, and, on that account, leaving the reader unexcited. It is in vain that the marvellous is infused, for nothing marvellous can be made out of it,

although it is a composition that, since its day, has been unsurpassed. In regard to the intrinsic value of the events accomplished, there is nothing to be compared to the conquest of Mexico but the invasion of Asia by Alexander, or the foundation of the Portuguese power in India. In those two episodes of the history of the human race, as in Mexico, the disproportion is enormous between the assailant force and that which is assailed. The infinitely small triumphs over the infinitely larger; genius reveals itself in all its splendour; by a sublime effort man bounds beyond the sphere to which he is ordinarily confined. It is the unexpected and the unforeseen in their highest expression.

If the conquest of Mexico is a prodigy, taken as a whole, the details are not less surprising. We know not what to admire the most in this crowded sequence of incidents, for the wonderful springs out at all points from the womb of the facts, as light from the diamond, or dazzling lustre from purple or gold. Shall we fix on the burning of the fleet, ordered by Cortez so as to leave no choice but death or victory? Or on the audacity with which the *Conquistador* made Montezuma a prisoner in his own palace, in the midst of his guards, in the heart of a devoted

capital? Shall we adjudge the palm to the campaign against Narvaez, or to the battle of Otumba, in which Cortez, reduced to a handful of men, without artillery, and almost demoralized, put to rout the Mexicans, intoxicated with their success in the *Noche Triste*, and killed their general with his own hand, at the instant when he himself seemed lost? Where is the history, where is the romance of the historical fashion, in which an adventure is to be found that can match with the combat fought on the platform of the great *teocalli*, a hundred and twenty feet high? Go still further into the details, and you will encounter romantic feats at every instant: there is the leap of Alvarado; there are the two Mexicans, who, in the *mêlée* on the summit of the great pyramid, took each other's hands, and rushed with all their might on Cortez, to precipitate him, together with themselves, from the full height, content to die if by their own deaths they purchased that of the enemy of their country and their gods. Or, better still, you have the ascent of the five soldiers who went to get sulphur from the crater of Popocatepetl. For want of sulphur the army was falling short of powder. It was suspected that, like Mount Etna, the volcano had a deposit of sulphur,

Five men were told off to go and see. They ascended—and heaven knows what it is to climb Popocatepetl: since their time, till 1827, no man dared the adventure. After journeying several days they reached the top, in spite of the lava and ashes, in spite of the blinding glitter of the snow, in spite of the cold of those lofty regions. A gulf a thousand feet in depth, at the bottom of which could be discerned a bluish flame, and from whence arose hot and pestilential vapours, stood yawning before them. They coolly cast lots who should descend; the chance fell to the leader of the small band, Montagno; he is put in a basket, suspended by a cord, and lets himself be lowered into the abyss. At a depth of four hundred feet he gets his supply of sulphur, and comes back as from a turn in one of the gardens of Seville or Cordova.

A variety of characters appear in the drama as strongly drawn—I say not as those of the "Æneid," for that would not be enough—but as those of the "Iliad" itself. He whom the Aztecs called *Tonatiuh* (the Sun), on account of his tall stature, his lofty look, and his long light hair, Alvarado del Salto, has the colossal vigour of the greater Ajax, the valour of the son of Tydeus, and the audacious sallies of the other

Ajax, who stops at nothing, not even at sacrilege. By side of this terrific figure we love to look on the young and heroic Sandoval, he whom Cortez calls his son, and who towards him represents the faithful Achates, or the well-beloved Patroclus; but he looms twenty cubits higher than the friend of Æneas, or the son of Menœtius; he commands admiration by the ardour and energy of his courage; he wins on us by the affection he receives and returns. After the assault, in which the Spaniards were roughly repulsed by Guatemozin, when he leaves his encampment in search of tidings of Cortez, whom the Aztecs boasted they had slain, and when alone, on a horse exhausted by a long day's combat, he crosses a vast plain covered with merciless enemies, the reader follows him with as much interest as Tancred and Rinaldo can excite in the most critical conjunctures, or as is aroused by the youthful Pallas at the last moment. Christoval de Olid—at a later period, however, a traitor to his general—Velasquez de Leon, Avila, Quignones, Andres de Tapia, Escalante, may very certainly be compared with Idomeneus, Philoctetes, Meriones, Menelaus, Antilochus, or Mnestheus. Thersites, a coward in fight, more a coward in the defamation with

which he bespatters the heroes, is nearly reproduced in the conspirators who plot an attempt on the general's life; or in those few companions of Narvaez, who, surfeited with booty, wanted to return to Cuba without carrying the enterprise through. Good Father Olmedo, a priest filled with enlightened faith and unwavering charity, who moderates the ardent prosyletism of the Spaniards, and restrains Cortez, impatient on this point alone, is a character far more noble and pious than the inanimate Calchas. And who would desire to change the vigilant pilot Alaminos for the drowsy Palinurus? Cortez, the general of the army, united the inflexible majesty of great Agamemnon, and all the qualifications for command that distinguish the king of kings, to the irresistible impetuosity of Achilles, and the ability of Ulysses, inexhaustible in expedients and artifices.

Among the Indian auxiliaries stands prominent Ixtlilxochitl, the prince of Tezcuco, a youth of determination, of warm fidelity to his new friends, and who, often stigmatized as a traitor by the Aztecs, replies to the accusation by multiplied instances of brilliant courage; and young Xicotencatl, of Tlascala, a more complete hero, who is ever on the rack between his hatred for

the Aztecs and the suspicion that the White men have come to make serfs of all the natives without exception. These are two original types in broad contrast. What a difference, also, in their ends! The one becomes cacique of Tezcuco; the other perishes on the gallows, as a deserter, for having, during the siege, quitted the ranks of the Spaniards, and, disgusted with them, retired into the mountains—a terrible example, which Cortez thought it his duty to give to the new vassals of his sovereign, that they might feel the extent of their obligations and the vigour of the hand under which they were marshalled. Another of the Tlascalan chiefs, old Magiscatzin, by his prudence and loyalty, by the bursts of energy that flow from him at a critical moment, when the eloquence of the Aztec ambassadors had almost determined the Senate of Tlascala to abandon Cortez, then a fugitive, resembles the sage Nestor, faithful to the gods, when at the sight of the Greeks giving way, and of Hector preparing to burn the ships, he once more calls for his javelins. He it is, too, who argues with Cortez on the character of the religion of his fathers, as the King of Pylos might have done.

The characteristics of the personages on the

Mexican side are no less strongly prominent. The noble figure of Hector does not throw into the shade that of Guatemozin, and one would like as well to be in a city defended by the latter, as under the ægis of the son of Priam. This prince, the last of the Aztec emperors, renders himself, at five-and-twenty, an object of admiration for his activity and spirit of resource. Brave beyond proof, he is at the same time familiar with the artifices of war. In his disasters we behold him sublime in his resignation. He is still a king, on the brazier, where, yielding to the greediness of his companions, Cortez has him placed to make him declare, by torture, where he has hidden his treasures—treasures which he had never hidden, for none were left him. He dies a king, when the *Conquistador*, deceived by false information during his toilsome campaign in the isthmus of Honduras, robs him of life. Cuitlahuac, the brother of Montezuma, the intrepid soldier, intelligent captain, and ardent patriot, is a more captivating type than Agenor, or even than Æneas. Of the other Trojan chiefs there is none nobler than Cacamatzin, the cacique of Tezcuco, when he receives with generous indignation the order to obey the Spaniards sent by Montezuma. And there was

no Paris in the ranks of the Aztecs who ignobly fled; every individual there knew how to die.

Montezuma himself, the unfortunate Montezuma, is no common type. Generous to prodigality, elegant to the utmost limits of display, royally affable, he had also a cultivated and acute mind. In his youth he showed himself intrepid in war, and belonged to the order of the *Quachictin*, who were the bravest of the brave; but he had fallen by degrees into imbecile bigotry. He believed that the astrological signs and the ancient prophecies of the country commanded him to submit to the Spaniards. By an inconceivable contradiction, betraying great weakness of soul, religious superstition, in reference to these audacious foreigners, effaced in him the sentiment of patriotism, though Cortez presented himself with the avowed intention of putting an end to the Mexican religion. Vainly did the sentiment of ambition, the passion for power that absorbs every one who has tasted of it, unite itself with the love of country to appeal to his energies; he could find nothing with which to oppose the invaders but tricks and craft that recall the Greeks of the Lower Empire. Prescott somewhere compares him to Louis XIV.—a supreme injustice to the

latter. If, like Montezuma, Louis XIV. was fond of excessive pomp, which made him burdensome to the people; if, like the Mexican prince, he allowed himself to be swayed by the false and pernicious ideas that were presented to him under the mask of religion, and if he committed the unpardonable and for ever fatal fault to his country of revoking the Edict of Nantes —it is not the less true that never, either in his unhappy old age or in his gay youth, did he cease to feel that he was the representative of a powerful and proud nationality, and to maintain the dignity of the feeling. His words to the *audacious Villars*, on the eve of the battle of Denain, in which the fortune of France was at stake, are sublime. Never would they have put him in irons, living. Undecided characters make a sad figure, however well endowed they may otherwise be, when destiny calls them to play the great characters of history. Such was Montezuma, such was not Louis XIV.

Neither are female characters wanting to the epic of the conquest of Mexico. We have not, however, the noble and touching Andromache, nor the gentle and plaintive Iphigenia, nor Hecuba, with her unparalleled woes, nor the tender and inconsolable Dido. But yet a fine

character is that of the young and beautiful daughter of the banks of the Guazacoalco, the offspring of a cacique, whom, in her infancy, an unnatural mother shamelessly sells to slave-dealers, and who, handed over to Cortez by a cacique of Yucatan, becomes his interpreter and trusted and loving adviser. Always at the side of Cortez, Doña Marina, so the Spaniards called her, did not confine herself to translating his words to the Mexicans. By an effort of that power of divination that a woman who loves possesses far more than the man of the world, she, in very difficult positions, gave him salutary warnings. Through her Cortez detected the spies despatched by Xicotencatl to hoodwink his watchfulness, whom, in consequence of the discovery, he sent back to their general mutilated of their hands. By her, too, in the sacerdotal and trading city of Cholula, he was informed of the conspiracy by which it was hoped to exterminate the little Castillian army at one blow. Marina produced a great impression on the natives. "*Beautiful*," says Camargo, the Tlascalan historian, "*as a goddess*, she seemed to the Mexicans a being superior to themselves, something above human nature." Her connexion with Cortez, of which no one was ignorant,

caused them to name him after her; Malinche was the name by which the natives designated her, and thenceforward Cortez was known as Malintzin. The interview and reconciliation of Marina with her mother, whom the strangest of chances placed in the path of Cortez during the expedition to Honduras, is a very interesting incident.

If we choose to compare the material efforts recounted in the Iliad and Æneid to those of the conquest, the superiority would still be entirely on the side of the latter drama. The *mêlée* of the *Noche Triste* has more of grandeur and horror than the assault on the wall that was encircled by the Greeks. What was that wall itself to those by which the people of Tlascala fortified themselves against the Aztecs, or compared with the entrenchments in which Cortez ensconced himself during the siege? What the attack on the ships by Hector to the furious assaults made by the Aztecs before the *Noche Triste*, on the palace of Axayacatl, occupied by the Spaniards? What contrast is there between the difficulty of constructing of planks the hollow body of the horse fatal to Troy, as proposed by the skilful Epeus, and the building of thirteen vessels of war in the forests of Tlas-

cala, by the labour of the craftsman, Martin Lopez?—and then the transport of this armada, piece by piece, on men's backs, across rugged mountains, for twenty leagues, to the shores of the lake on which was situated the Aztec capital?

The historian or poet has not to imagine for the conquest of Mexico the intervention of Heaven—the marvellous properly so called; the actors in the conquest have spared them the trouble. On the side of Cortez, these men inured to combat, who had fought, some in Italy against the French, others on the seas against the Turks, believed they saw the venerated Apostle St. James, drawing his sword for them mounted on a white horse, and the Virgin encouraging them. This they saw—with their own eyes they saw it. Bernal Diaz, one of them, attests it. Cortez himself remained persuaded that Peter, his patron saint, assumed the features and dress of a Tlascalan warrior to intervene and save his life. To the Spaniards the Mexican divinities were transfigurations of Satan, who exhausted his malice against them, to which Paradise, as was natural, responded by miracles. On the Mexican side the horsemen were, in the beginning, taken for peculiar beings; the man and the beast formed one—it was the

fable of the Centaurs revived in reality. The White men had in themselves something divine, as is shown by the epithet *white gods* bestowed on them by the Mexicans. Another form of the marvellous found in all epic poems, that of gloomy forewarnings, is also found here. Phenomena attesting the anger of the gods are visible on all sides. A flaming comet appears; the waters of the lake surge up and suddenly burst on Mexico, without a tempest having disturbed the atmosphere, or an earthquake shaken the table-land of Anahuac on its massive base; a vast conflagration lays waste the capital; low and wailing voices are heard in the air announcing calamities, and the Princess Papantzin, the emperor's sister, though four days dead, issues from the tomb to tell him a catastrophe is imminent. Lastly, what more marvellous than the tradition concerning the god Quetzalcoatl, with white complexion and bearded visage, who was one day to disembark from the east, or to send his descendants to reign in his place—a tradition that seemed so clearly to indicate Cortez, and which he turned to great use!

Among the motives that authorize poets to mix up heaven in the affairs of the earth, in a direct and active manner, and that give, as it

were, a body to their fictions, to the degree that the commonalty of mankind take their stories literally, we may point out two as the chief: one is the extreme difficulty overcome, which it may appear cannot be explained but by superhuman agency; another is, a concurrence of accidental circumstances—in the number of which, however, it is not forbidden to reckon genius—that brings about solutions contrary to all probability. When historical facts bear a deep impress of one or other of these characteristics, it suffices to look at them or to exhibit them through the prism of the imagination, to see in them or cause to be seen in them the marvellous. Now there is nothing else in the conquest of Mexico from one end to the other, from the landing of Cortez to the taking of the city. At every instant we have incredible obstacles surmounted by the force of intelligence, of daring and energy, or of fortuitous combinations that upset all chances. The Spaniards—I should say, the entire Peninsula, for, when speaking of heroism, who would desire to separate from it the country of Vasco de Gama and Albuquerque—were at that moment the great nation of Europe and of the world, and it seemed that Heaven was pleased to render them assistance.

Perhaps, at this point, the reader will not consider so strange that which I put forward at the commencement, that the principal characteristic of the conquest was impressed on it by religion, by religious proselytism. In our times it is the love of glory, or enthusiasm for liberty, that carries men on to great actions. Three centuries ago, the dominant passion among the Spaniards was that of the propagation of the faith. It needed a motive as potent as the religious sentiment militant for these marvels to be accomplished, even with instruments such as the genius and the prowess of Cortez. Those who would maintain that thirst for gold could inspire so much heroism and cause these great things to be performed, do not know and would vilify human nature.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO, AND THE INTOLERANT SPIRIT BY WHICH IT WAS CHARACTERIZED, EXPLAINED BY THE STATE OF THOUGHT AND FEELING IN SPAIN.

Religious faith, which must therefore be recognised as one of the principal incentives to the conquest of Mexico—and much more, as the main cause of the success of the enterprise—and which therein displays itself indissolubly united with the spirit of intolerance, forms with that very accompaniment a feature common to the physiognomy of the Spaniards of the time, of the most illustrious and of the vulgar alike. The Spanish nation was then impregnated with an ardent and exacting religious feeling, which, before the inward tribunal of humanity, was no bar to capitulations of conscience and compromises dictated by interest, or even, to give

things their proper names, by cupidity, because self almost always has its share in the actions of men. The struggle against the Moors had roused —we might well say exasperated—Christian feeling among the Spaniards. Victories gained over the Mussulmans were regularly followed, at the hand of this nation, full of honour, and disposed to chivalrous ideas, not only by severities but by atrocities. This was because a hateful interpretation of religion so counselled or commanded. When Cortez was accomplishing his heroic enterprise, but a short number of years had passed away since God had summoned from this earth the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada, of sinister memory, who himself alone* had caused to be burnt one after the other nine thousand persons, without reckoning the thousands condemned who saved themselves from torture by exile, and whom the Holy Office had the vexation of burning in effigy only. When Cortez was conquering Mexico the Inquisition was stronger than ever, and was carrying out its merciless maxims. In regard to the non-Christian population, the right of war was carried to a limit that Christians ought never to have

* From 1481 to 1496.

reached. At the close of the fifteenth century the Spaniards believed themselves, as regarded Jews and vanquished Mahometans, to be permitted such excesses as those that sullied military glory under the rough generals of the Roman republic, ages before the doctrine of Christ had come to change the discipline of souls, and to teach men reciprocal goodwill. In the wars against the Moors, the inhabitants of an entire town were reduced to slavery and sold, when they were not put to death in cold blood. King Ferdinand made eleven thousand slaves at the taking of Malaga. It was discussed whether these unfortunates should not be slaughtered, and it needed all the entreaties of Queen Isabella to save their lives. Such were the lessons Cortez and his companions brought from their own country.

The atmosphere then to be breathed in Spain was so intensely that of a faith fervent in its extreme manifestations, but implacable towards infidels, that foreigners themselves, when they had lived there some time, came to be partakers of the common passion against unbelievers. We have a remarkable instance of this in Christopher Columbus, who was of a kindly disposition, and above very many of the prejudices of his epoch.

When he had become a Spaniard, and had been in long contact with the men and things of his new country, the boiling proselytism that we have remarked in Hernando Cortez seizes hold of him. He is mystical, he is intolerant, he is cruel.

While he is in Lisbon, soliciting a ship from the King of Portugal, and in the early days of his sojourn in Spain, it is science that inspires him; it is to scientific researches that he attributes the idea of which he pursues the execution —that vast territories are to be found by navigating in a Western direction. The learned Toscanelli is his oracle, on account of his knowledge. During his first voyage, the most critical and most serious of all, it is the scientific impulse that is manifested in him. A little later and he goes so far as to repudiate every motive springing from profane knowledge; it is to the Holy Spirit that he ascribes the inspiration to which he has been obedient. He is thinking of the Holy Places, of Jerusalem groaning under the Infidels, he is revolving in his head the plan of a crusade. "Reason," he says, "mathematical science, and the charts of geography have availed me nothing." In his opinion, "nothing has come to pass but what the Prophet Isaiah

had foretold; the Sacred Prophecies must receive their accomplishment before the end of the world; the Gospel must be preached over the whole earth, and the Holy City must be restored to the Church." Prior to the epoch at which he traced these lines, which was but one year antecedent to his death, he writes to the Catholic monarchs, at the moment of setting out on one of his voyages, that his object is to procure gold, so that he may have the means of redeeming a vast number of souls from purgatory. On his return from his first voyage he sends word to the Pope that his purpose is to organize a grand expedition, a new and final crusade, that should free the Holy Sepulchre from the yoke of the Infidels; and he binds himself to set aside from the profits he expects from his discoveries as much as should keep on foot 50,000 infantry and 5000 horse for seven years. He has already calculated that in three years he will have all the gold necessary for this great armament. On another occasion, when he had landed somewhere at the mouth of the Orinoco, what he flatters himself to have discovered. Is the site of the terrestrial Paradise. The Bible, the Gospel, the Sacred Prophecies, the triumph of the Catholic Faith over the whole of the

earth's surface, throw his great intellect into a ferment.

So much for the mysticism.

Let us next note intolerance carried to cruelty.

The Indians having been discovered in Pagan darkness, there was no harm in reducing them to slavery, and sending them in that condition to the Peninsula. It was for their good, for once amongst Spaniards they could not fail to become good Christians. If they were deprived of liberty, a far greater good was given them in exchange—the teaching of the Gospel and the true Faith. And buoying himself up with these sophistries, drawn from a false and corrupt theology, Christopher Columbus, with a heart fundamentally humane, was expediting cargoes of Indians to Cadiz or Seville. *A fortiori* did he constrain them to forced labour in the gold-mines, telling them that it was to procure the wealth with which to make the campaign that should deliver Christ's tomb. The kind feeling of Queen Isabella put an end to the traffic in slaves transported to Spain from San Domingo and the other islands; but the destruction of the unhappy race alone put an end to their slavery in the gold-mines.

With Columbus intolerance exhibited itself in other ways than enslaving Indians, and pitilessly condemning them to labour in the gold-mines. He readily and on all occasions made open profession of it. In one of his first letters to the two Catholic sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella, when he is explaining to them his views on the government of the countries he has just discovered, he expressly tells them that those lands should be closed to every one that was not a true believer. "I maintain (he says), that your Highnesses ought not to suffer any foreigner, if he be not a Catholic and a good Christian, to establish himself in that land which was discovered only for the glory and aggrandizement of Christianity."

It is to be remarked that at that very moment the torch of the faith seemed rather to be dying out in the major part of Europe. The abuses that had become incorporated into the Catholic hierarchy, and the vices of which the Court of Rome presented a too notorious picture, detached from the Holy See all the most enlightened of the European population, even in Italy, and separated from it the intellectual and moral *élite* of France, Germany, and England. But fanaticism was not extinguished; on the contrary,

its fury redoubled. Sovereign Pontiffs, who had but to cast their looks downwards to their own breasts to perceive there the Cross—the emblem of patience, resignation, gentleness, and of the spirit of peace and charity—gave themselves up to impious paroxysms, and ordered exterminations that would have surpassed the human sacrifices offered to Mexican idols if they could have found executants whose sanguinary rage responded to their notions. A system of religious persecution, that was a revolt against Christian feeling, was being organized over all Europe. France herself, yielding to suggestions that were dared to be presented under the veil of religion, was soon to offer the spectacle of one of the greatest crimes that fanaticism ever counselled and accomplished, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew;* and the Papacy of the day, in its wandering from the right path, was to extol the misdeed as a glorious action—as a work of piety.

In thus showing how the religious character of the conquest, and particularly the intolerance that was displayed, are explained by the spirit

* From the taking of Mexico to St. Bartholomew was 51 years. The first event was in 1521; the second in 1572.

that then animated Spain, I have not intended in any way to justify intolerance. I have purposed simply to point to a chain of causes and effects. In spite of his intolerance, Cortez is inscribed by History in the number of great men, because History must have indulgence—human nature has need of it; but he would have been greater if he had been less intolerant. From the source whence he drew his intolerance issued a poisoned stream for the Peninsula itself. By it were paralysed the noblest faculties of the Spanish nation, and a taint of consumption was developed in it from which it all but perished.

It is easy to form an estimate of the fatal germ contained in the system imported into America by the Spaniards, by the assistance of a comparison that naturally presents itself to the mind—that of Mexico and the Spanish colonies in general, with a neighbouring colony, that founded by the Puritans, more to the north of the same continent. Exactly a century after the conquest of Mexico by Cortez, some pilgrims quitted the, to them, inhospitable shores of Europe, and went to seek in the New World an asylum for their persecuted convictions; as if the religious sentiment was to be, almost on all hands, one of the chief motives for the colo-

nization of the continent given to Europe by Columbus. These were the Puritans, whom the hazard of the sea cast on the soil of Massachusetts, in the harbour of Plymouth. They were without the pale of the Catholic hierarchy; but they formed none the less a branch of Christianity, and not the one either to which was reserved the least magnificent future.

These men, so much to be esteemed for their private qualities, and to be admired for their religious convictions and heroic firmness, by whose hands Christian civilization was to be acclimatized in vast countries scarcely peopled by petty tribes of savages, were beyond all things animated by the desire of carrying into practice their religious belief. New England,* where they fixed themselves, was a religious establishment; it was far more so than Mexico or Peru, since, at the commencement, the exercise of civil rights was there inseparable from a particular form of belief. The two powers, temporal and spiritual, were at first confounded, a combination which is justly considered as

* The name of New England is reserved to this day to the group of six States peopled principally by descendants from the Puritans; they are Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.

necessarily engendering despotism, and which, in fact, did for a moment result in tyranny among this generous offshoot of the Anglo-Saxon race. But from the effect of the peculiar genius of that race, or from a virtue belonging to those superior families, who had been fully purified by passing through the crucible of adversity, New England soon adopted better courses. The two powers were separated, and the country presented the double bloom of civil liberty and liberty of worship, without prejudice to that political liberty which was destined to display itself there in proportions till then unknown in the world.

Under the conditions they had chosen for themselves, and which they understood not only how to perpetuate but to develop, the Anglo-Saxon race found themselves almost immediately possessed of elements of vitality and expansion wanting to other Europeans established in the New World, and particularly to the Spanish race. The impulse of civil, religious, and political liberty made up to the population of New England for the poverty of the soil on which they had settled. They successively increased in number, in personal power, and in wealth; they peopled and fertilized boundless districts,

better than those on which they had first landed, and acquired in the new hemisphere a preponderance that in the end attracted all eyes.

This invariably maintained ardour for civil, religious, and political liberty is the distinctive characteristic of New England as compared with the colonies founded in America by Spain. It is, without doubt, the explanation and origin of the complete change that has come into effect, in the nineteenth century, in the political balance of the New World, where the group of American nations of Spanish foundation has been eclipsed by the United States.

PART III.

MEXICO UNDER THE COLONIAL SYSTEM.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE NATIVE POPULATIONS WERE TREATED AFTER THE CONQUEST.

We have sketched the fall of the Aztec empire, and the establishment on its ruins of the authority of the kings of Spain. Thus, then, we see the Aztecs and the native populations, who were more or less amalgamated with them, placed in the condition of conquered races. How were they treated, and what was the fate of the country in the times that followed?

Mexico, become a dependency of the crown of Spain, was not governed worse than the other Spanish possessions of the American continent. It was even governed less ill. It contained a native population which was more numerous, more advanced at the moment of the conquest, and of greater aptitude for the exercise of the useful arts. Equal, at least, to the countries of

the New World, the most favoured by Nature, and even possessed of greater mineral wealth than Peru, it became more productive than all the rest put together to the treasury of the mother country, to which eventually it contributed a large sum annually. The country was easy to reach by sea, and the voyage was not long. Mexico, then, was destined to be, and in point of fact was, an object of greater solicitude to the Council of the Indies and the Spanish Cabinet than the rest of the colonies. Abuses were there repressed with a less indolent hand. The officials charged to govern it, under the imposing title of Viceroys, were chosen with more discernment, and were less absorbed by the care of making a personal fortune, whilst neglecting the interests of the *kingdom** confided to their patriotism. Several were eminent for their intelligence, and were of generous sentiments, on which they acted. Count de Revilla Gigedo and some others would have been cited everywhere as able adminis-

* This was the designation given to the colony in all official documents. Some other colonies, and among them Peru, were likewise so designated; but the rest were called Captaincies-General.

trators, friends of humanity, and promoters of civilization.

The Indians—for that was the name by which the native population was designated, owing to an error of Christopher Columbus, who believed that he had landed in India,* not that he had discovered a new continent—the Indians were protected in Mexico with greater zeal and perseverance than in the other colonies. The great Queen Isabella, who all her life felt strong compassion for them, strongly recommended them, on her death-bed, to the Christian sentiments of her successors; and it is justice to the Court of Spain to say that on many occasions it was far from showing itself unworthy of this touching inheritance, particularly in Mexico. If that Court were far from understanding the full extent of its duties towards the subjected populations, if it troubled itself little to make them attain a more advanced state of civilization, it

* It is known that strictly speaking it was China and Japan which he thought he had discovered by the Western route, which was supposed by him to be shorter than the Eastern one. All these countries bore the general denomination of the Indies, and after the discovery of America it remained to the latter.

had at least the merit of combating the excesses of their oppressors, in so far as that was possible on the part of a not very enlightened government, obliged to confide in agents at a distance of eighteen hundred leagues, and with a political system which, by excluding all representative guarantees and all publicity, opened the door to many abuses. In its efforts to be humane to the Indians, it did not confine itself solely to the wish of Queen Isabella; it also followed the counsels of the man of genius who overthrew the empire of Montezuma and Guatemozin. Hernando Cortez testified, in the most positive terms in his will, to the necessity he felt of being just and benevolent to this subjugated race. The royal wish found in this work of humanity valuable auxiliaries in the ranks of the clergy, who in Mexico never forgot that Christianity received from its divine founder the high and holy mission of protecting the weak. It also obtained useful co-operation from the courts of justice or *audiencias*, which, if they after, as will be seen, committed the error of obstinately representing the spirit of domination, with which the Spaniards who had hastened to the country to make fortunes were animated, had also the merit to remain immovable in their

fidelity to the crown, and in the desire to cause its designs to triumph. In its more sincere than intelligent solicitude for the Indians, the Court of Madrid found in the civil functionaries, the intendants, appointed at a later period, more efficacious instruments than the *audiencias*, which were not numerous, and which were absorbed in their judicial duties. Each of those functionaries was placed in a province, and was entrusted with its administration—properly so called—as is the case with the prefects of departments in France, but with greater power. Unfortunately, the intendancies were only organized towards the end of the eighteenth century, and the evil which had then been done was incalculable. The Indian population of Mexico, so interesting by the resigned submission it displayed after the conquest, and by the aptitude for work which distinguished it from many other American races, had to suffer greatly from the cupidity and brutality of the conquerors, or the colonists their imitators. It had been crushed and degraded, and to elevate it was a task almost impossible.

The men who, when once the conquest was consummated, rushed from the Peninsula to Mexico, and, indeed, also to the islands in which

the colonization of the New World commenced, were generally avaricious and audacious, not shrinking from the employment of violence to satisfy their passions. On account of the paganism in which the natives lived when the Europeans discovered them, the latter considered them as out of the pale of the law, and treated them without pity, following in that respect the example set by the *conquistadores*, in whose eyes the natives were a vanquished people, subject to all the rigorous rights of war. The Indians were therefore overwhelmed with work. They were dragged from their villages to the mountains to seek for gold and silver; they were buried in the mines. The idea that these unfortunate people were men and fellow-creatures did not enter the minds of the first colonists. In the islands, and particularly in Hispaniola (San Domingo), and in Cuba, where the native population was numerous, the fatal system of *repartimientos* was applied; and from the islands it passed into Mexico. It consisted in dividing the Indians among the Spaniards, as would have been done with a drove of oxen or with horses. This was purely and simply slavery, and slavery without any guarantee. The cruelties and excesses of all kinds which were committed under

this system rapidly destroyed the Indian race in the two great islands I have named, and decimated it in Mexico.

The spectacle of this extermination of the native race by the pitiless avarice of the colonists, excited the indignation of a priest who was eminently Christian in his charity and disinterestedness. Bartholomew Las-Casas made America and Spain ring with his energetic and indefatigable protests. He obtained the appointment of capable and pious commissioners, charged to ascertain, and, if possible, repair the evil. In the islands it could not be remedied; but on the American continent, where the arrival of Europeans was of more recent date, and where the native race was more robust, and disseminated over a wider space, the configuration of which afforded greater means of hiding,—that race resisted better the ill-treatment which was prodigally inflicted on it; and it was possible to save it from destruction.

The system of *repartimientos* was abolished in Mexico, and was replaced by that of *encomiendas*, which placed the Indians in a situation analogous to that of peasants in Europe attached to the glebe: they had a master to whom they had been awarded by the authority of the mother

country, by groups of hundreds of families, under the condition of employing them in a specified object; as for example, the cultivation of a domain. Thus was repeated in the New World the march of social institutions on the Old Continent—serfdom after slavery. The improvement was a real one, although it was still very far from that civil liberty which is the necessary accompaniment of Christianity,—so much so, that in the absence of that liberty we are justified in saying that the Christian religion is turned from its path and falsified. Under this system, the parish priest, of whom frequently the Indians constituted all the flock, could with better effect raise his voice in their favour.

The masters among whom the Indians were thus divided—the nobles excepted, who remained free—were soldiers who had distinguished themselves in the conquest, or lawyers who were sent from the Peninsula to take part in the government of provinces, in order that they might form a counterpoise to the conquerors, whose pretensions were unbounded; or, finally, they were colonists of a certain degree of importance. It was not easy for the clergy to make these different classes reasonable; and it was still more difficult when the clergy were placed in a situa-

tion which rendered them the accomplices of the masters of the Indians. In order to endow the religious orders, the unfortunate idea was conceived of giving to convents a certain number of *encomiendas* which were not the least in importance. In this manner, religion, the essence of which is to promote the enfranchisement of populations, profited directly by their enslavement. This measure, adopted for the temporal interests of the clergy, was greatly to be regretted.

The system of *encomiendas*, thus arranged, could not fail to give rise to great abuses. But it was overthrown in its turn by the Court of Spain, and the merit of this excellent reform belongs to King Charles III.

This prince, who was really enlightened, and who made great efforts to raise Spain, bowed down by the weight of retrograde institutions, but who did not succeed, owing, so to speak, to the spring of that great nation being then broken, laboured also to regenerate and promote the progress of New Spain; and in that freer field he had a little more success. One of his measures was the abolition of *encomiendas*, of which a part had already ceased to exist, because the feudal holders invested with them had died with-

out leaving the descendants required by law. Another was the establishment of intendancies. He instituted them in order that the Indians spread over the different provinces should have protectors highly placed, independent of the local influences which were exercised contrary to the interests and the rights of these poor people. The intendants, twelve in number, were chosen with intelligence. Their vigilance could not change the basis of the system adopted for the Indians, which was supposed to be paternal, but was really oppressive;* still, by the creation of intendancies, there was now within the reach of each locality an active *surveillance* inspired by the love of justice.

This new organization, however, profited but little to the conquered races. If it restrained acts of violence scandalously notorious, it was powerless to prevent the petty vexations constantly repeated, and the exactions enveloped in subterfuges, with which the Indians were overwhelmed.

By the establishment of intendancies, the *alcaldes mayores*, who had previously existed in all localities, and who oppressed the natives, were abolished. But what officers were put in their

* See following chapter.

place? Agents called *subdelegates*, who were interdicted from engaging in any sort of commerce, because commerce would have afforded them the means of oppressing the Indians. It would seem that in consequence of this prohibition it would have been natural to accord them a rather high salary; but none at all was given. What ensued may easily be divined: the subdelegates proved once more that, as a general rule, there is nothing more onerous for the people than unpaid functionaries. A venerable prelate, Antonio de San Miguel, bishop of the vast diocese of Michoacan, in a report to the King of Spain, drawn up in concert with his chapter in 1799, thus described the conduct of these agents:— "The *alcaldes mayores* at least administered justice with impartiality when their own interests were not at stake. But the subdelegates, having no revenue except fees, consider themselves warranted in having recourse to illicit means to procure a certain degree of comfort; and hence they exercise perpetual vexations, abuse their authority over the poor, act in connivance with the rich, and make a shameful traffic of justice."

It was also Charles III. who prohibited the *corregidors* from employing a practice by which

they, like the *alcaldes mayores*, procured themselves troops of slaves. These functionaries arbitrarily made themselves the creditors of the Indians by selling them, at extravagant prices, horses, mules, and clothing. The Indians, not being able to pay, were forced to work for them; and this obligation to work, or, to speak more clearly, this servitude, once contracted, was easily perpetuated by means of new sales, or by the employment of artifices which such influential personages as the *corregidors* excelled in devising; and, unfortunately, to these frauds avaricious men had no difficulty in adding others. There is no security against the exactions and the tyranny of powerful men in countries where there are neither representative institutions nor publicity.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE CONDITION OF THE INDIANS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AND ON THAT OF THE MIXED RACE.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Humboldt visited Mexico, he found the Indians in a condition better than that of feudal serfdom. The *repartimientos* and the *encomiendas* had disappeared; but though ceasing to be slaves or serfs, the Indians did not become free; they bore the chains of a legal minority, which weighed on them to the tomb. With the view of preserving them from acts in which violence was united to fraud, the natives were declared unable to contract for any sum exceeding five piastres (1*l.*)—a remedy which was worse than the evil, for under pretext of guaranteeing them in transactions in which they might have been despoiled, they were placed under the impossi-

bility of acquiring. The greater part of them were forced to reside in villages in which the Whites were interdicted from establishing themselves. The Indian was thus obliged to pass his life within a narrow circle traced around his village, where most frequently he was without means of existence, wanting even land, in a country where nine-tenths of the soil were uncultivated. He paid an annual tribute, so called, which, from that name alone, was for him a humiliation. As a set-off, he was free from the indirect tax, the *alcavala;* but he would have preferred to pay the *alcavala*, and not be a tributary.

An important amelioration in the existence of the Mexican Indians was, that they were relieved from the *mita*, or forced labour in mines. This burden, which was not suppressed in Peru until the establishment of independence, ceased in Mexico long before. No doubt the Mexican Indians worked in the metallic veins in the bosom of the earth, but they did so voluntarily, and they were paid good wages.

A certain number of Indians were well off. There was, first of all, the class of caciques, or Indian nobles, who were freed from tribute, and

placed under peculiar regulations, of which we shall speak presently. In addition to this class, various circumstances had secured wealth to some natives, who knew how to preserve it, and in whose families it had remained. Humboldt cites an old woman who died at Cholula whilst he was there collecting information: she left to her children fields cultivated with *maguey*, or Mexican aloes, of the value of more than 300,000 fr. (12,000*l.*) Other Indian families possessed fortunes of 800,000 fr. and 1,000,000 fr. (32,000*l.* and 40,000*l.*); but the Indian, rich or even well to do, was a rare exception.

The classes of mixed blood, consisting principally of the crossings of Indians with Whites, and, for a small part, by the mixture of negroes with the two other races, were scarcely better off than the Indians of pure race. All these mixed people, who were very numerous, and were classed under the denomination of *castes,* were degraded legally and *de facto* (*infames de derecho y hecho*), according to the expression of the Bishop of Michoacan, in the report we have mentioned. They paid tribute like the Indians, but they were not kept like them in that perpetual minority which had been

invented at Madrid in order to protect them; they, however, endured many wrongs, which were committed in violation of the law, or by fraudulent interpretations of it.

This class, which, more than the Indians, was mixed up with the Whites, had less reason to fear and respect them. It was also less demoralized than the pure Indian, and supported more impatiently the abject condition to which it was reduced.

There was employed in Mexico a denomination which is not yet abandoned, and which well described the condition of the Indians. Compared with them, the Whites were called *gente de razon* —the race endowed with reason. The Indians were supposed not to have any, and were in the general opinion out of the pale of the *gente de razon.* This was an explanation and a justification of the degraded state in which they were kept. The mixed race, on the contrary, were expressly comprised in the category of "reasonable people."

Not being able to employ properly their reason and their liberty, this class, which the Europeans might have turned to excellent account, employed them at times very badly.

Robberies, and especially those on the highways, were, for example, most frequently perpetrated by the men of mixed blood. Whenever a caravan or diligence was stopped, people were certain that the criminals were not Indians; they never did anything of the kind. Suspicion could only fall on the Whites, or the half-breeds; and the probability was for or rather against, the latter. On this subject I will relate an anecdote which was told me by Baron Deffandis, who, when I was in Mexico, represented France in that country with dignity. He was with his family on an excursion in the north, and when he had arrived at a few leagues from the Lake of Chapala, he made inquiries on a subject which then, as now, preoccupied everybody travelling in Mexico—I mean thieves, who, since the Declaration of Independence, commit highway robberies with unexampled audacity. "Are there any robbers on the road?" asked Baron Deffandis. "Oh, no!" was the answer. "You have nothing to fear; in these parts there are no *gente de razon!*" I will not affirm at the present day that Indians do not possess *reason*, and that they do not take part in robbing diligences and isolated travellers.

On the whole, notwithstanding the kindness towards them manifested at the Court of Madrid, the condition of most of the Indians, who formed the major part of the population of Mexico, was wretched in both a moral and material point of view.

The principal cause of their misery was the error into which people fell at Madrid, relative to the means of governing them in conformity with their interest. It was sincerely believed in the King's councils, that the narrow restrictions on the free will of the Indians which had been erected into a system, gave them guarantees and protected them, as if any protection could be equivalent to liberty! How can the man deprived of his liberty defend himself? Is not the man whose hands are tied at the mercy of every one who attacks him? The measures adopted at the Court of Madrid in favour of these unfortunate Indians, turned against them by virtue of the laws of human nature itself. The Bishop of Michoacan judged this system with sagacity and profundity when he said to the King, in the excellent report quoted above—" Solorzano, Fraso, and other Spanish authors, have in vain sought for the secret cause by which the privileges ac-

corded to the Indians constantly produced effects unfavourable to that caste. I am astonished that these celebrated lawyers did not see, that what they call a secret cause is founded in the nature of those privileges themselves. They are arms which have never served for the protection of those they were meant to defend, and which the other castes cunningly turned against the native races. A number of such deplorable circumstances has produced in the latter a laziness of mind, a state of indifference and apathy, in which man is moved neither by hope nor fear."

The natives who, under pretence of being protected, were thus unfortunately placed out of the reach of the means of legitimate defence, were illtreated and plundered even by their own fellows. In each of the villages exclusively occupied by people of this race, were found, down to the end of Spanish domination, eight or ten old Indians, exercising the monopoly of local magistracy, and living in idleness at the expense of the others. Their authority was based, either on the distinction of their family, which, however, was often imaginary, or on skilful policy practised from father to son. These chiefs were

almost always the only inhabitants of the village who spoke Spanish, and they had great interest in maintaining their brethren in the most profound ignorance. They contributed as much as they could to maintain prejudice and barbarism among their people.

There was reason to believe, that if ideas favourable to independence were to gain ground, the native race, who had not forgotten the time when it was master of the country, might rise in insurrection; and in that case was it not likely that it would indulge in all the excesses which resentment long suppressed may inspire in a people kept out of the pale of enlightenment and civilization? It had for some time been of urgent importance to provide for the amelioration of the condition of the Indians, by acts that should be more efficacious and more determinate than all that had been hitherto done, and be conceived in a different spirit. It was necessary, in a word, to adopt measures of the kind suggested by a sentiment of liberty. And the same was the case for the people of mixed blood. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Government of the mother country had received warnings on this point which it

did wrong to neglect. The most remarkable is the report of the Bishop of Michoacan, from which I have already quoted. The abuses of which the Indians and the castes were victims, and the moral degradation which oppression had caused among them, were described therein with a firm hand. The misfortunes of the future were predicted with sinister clearness, which the kindliness and the spirit of charity of the pious Bishop did not disguise. "What attachment to the Government can be entertained," said he, "by the Indian, who is despised and degraded, who is almost without property, and without the hope of ameliorating his condition? He is attached to social life by a tie which presents no advantage to him. Your Majesty must not believe that the fear of chastisement will alone suffice to preserve tranquillity in this country; there must be other and more powerful motives. If the new laws which Spain awaits with impatience do not regulate the position of Indians and of coloured people, the influence of the clergy, however great it may be over these unfortunate creatures, will not suffice to retain them in the submission and the respect due to their sovereign."

"The new laws which Spain awaited with impatience," to employ the expression of the Bishop of Michoacan, were not adopted, and the consequences which that venerable prelate foresaw were not long in coming.

CHAPTER III.

THE CACIQUES, OR INDIAN NOBLES, SYSTEMATICALLY DEGRADED.

THE conquerors, as we have already indicated, recognised and consecrated the inequality existing among the natives, in this sense, that the caciques, or Indian nobles, were classed apart from the lower order of the natives. They were even nominally admitted to participate in the privileges of the nobles of Castille; but they did not profit by the advantage, or were prevented from profiting by it. Faithful in that respect to the example presented almost everywhere by the aristocracies of conquered countries, they had little inclination to associate with the Spaniards, and to marry into their families. They even went the length of preferring to plough with their own hands the fields which, under the *ancien regime*, they made their vassals cultivate.

Their natural pride, and the resentment they felt at their defeat, induced them to remain mixed up with the Indian people, and to live like them, affecting the same simplicity in food and clothing. This humble existence was perhaps at the beginning an expedient adopted by the Indian nobles, in order not to attract the attention of the Spaniards whom they had combated with the rage of despair. Perhaps, also, they adopted it because, in isolating themselves from their conquerors, and living among their old vassals, they found vestiges of their down-trodden country and their destroyed nationality. This illusion was prompted by the respect which was testified for them by the Indians, who had remained imbued with the notions of the social hierarchy established in the Aztec empire. Education, aided by a little time, would have triumphed over this spirit of isolation and this patriotic repugnance. The Spanish authorities had for a time the idea of having recourse to the powerful instrument of education. Nothing else could, in an equal degree, cement the fusion of the conquerors and the vanquished, and accelerate the movement of civilization in the country. It was proposed to attract to establishments founded for the purpose, under the

name of Colleges for Indian nobles, the young generations of the native nobility, and the generous project was to be extended to all Spanish America. But such a measure, though as politic as it was humane, did not accord with the systematic distrust which Spain entertained towards her colonies. Bad governments fear everything—and really they are not wrong so to do, for their authority is never firmly established, and is always at the mercy of accidents. The Spanish Government imagined that if the descendants of the Indian nobles were initiated in the knowledge of Europe, they would employ it to agitate the country and reconquer their independence. Accordingly, the sage design of spreading instruction among the Indians, beginning with the remnants of their aristocracy, was not carried out.

M. Alaman relates that in Mexico, before anything of the kind was established for Spanish youth, a college for Indian nobles was founded in the convent of Santiago de Tlatelolco, belonging to the Franciscan order. The first Viceroy of Mexico, after the ephemeral apparition of Cortez in the government, Don Antonio de Mendoza, came in person to preside at its solemn inauguration. But no sooner had that college been

opened than the policy of degrading the Indians beginning to be acted on, it was treated in such a way that it became disorganized; and the institution of others was prevented. Towards the end of the last century, a wealthy cacique residing at Puebla, Don Juan de Castilla, went to Madrid to solicit the authorities to establish a college for Indians in his native city. He passed years in haunting the antechambers of that capital, but obtained nothing. The viceroy of that epoch, the Marquis de Branciforte, was accustomed to say that in America instruction ought to be confined to the Catechism. In conformity with this maxim, the mass of Indians learned nothing, except what they could pick up in the religious lessons of the parish priest in their infancy; and even those lessons, says M. Alaman, were, as regards their object, very incomplete and very short. Subjected to the same system, reduced to the same intellectual pittance, the Indian nobles knew no more than the vulgar.

With the kind of life which they led, and the torpor in which their minds were left plunged, the Indian nobles could not fail to become degraded. That was what the Spanish government wanted, and the result fully equalled its expectation. At the beginning of the century, and no

doubt long before, the same absence of education, the same grossness of manners, was observed in them as in the lower Indian people. They did not hold any of the offices which are sought after by civilized classes. Whatever might have been the rank of their ancestors in the Aztec hierarchy, they were found neither in the career of arms nor in that of justice. And after having remained plunged in the profound ignorance we have described, how could they be admitted to the latter? The sole magistracy they exercised was that of the Indian villages; and there, instead of trying to promote the welfare of their fellow-countrymen, they more frequently appeared to take pleasure in oppressing them. Charged to levy the poll-tax, they took advantage of it to extort small sums. They made themselves the instruments of the Spaniards to torment their brethren, provided they derived some profit for so doing. They thus presented the sad spectacle of a complete and humiliating degradation.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE INDIANS BECAME CHRISTIANS.

THE Christian religion was easily introduced among the Mexican people, when once the conquest was consummated. The inferior classes, who, in the time of the Aztec empire, formed the majority of the population, were still greater in proportion after the siege and capture of Mexico, because the superior classes had been almost entirely destroyed in the terrible war. They were prepared to accept from the hands of the conqueror new divinities as well as new laws: their native gods appeared to them vanquished. Besides, amidst the extreme complication of the theology and cosmogony of the Mexicans, it was not difficult to discover or invent a certain connexion between the Aztec Olympus and Biblical or Christian tra-

ditions. We had a proof of this in the manner in which Cortez cleverly turned to account the resemblance between the physiognomy of the Spaniards and that of the king-god Quetzalcoatl. The rituals of the Catholic Church, translated immediately after the conquest into hieroglyphics, in order that they might be understood by the natives, testified to the effort which was then made to induce the people to adopt Christianity, by means of the analogies it presented with the Mexican mythology. It was thus that the Holy Ghost became identified with the Sacred Eagle of the Aztecs. Most of the missionaries, seeing how much their task would be facilitated thereby, not only tolerated, but favoured, at least in a certain manner, this confusion of ideas, which did not prevent them from teaching Christian morality. In order to attach the natives to the Gospel, they persuaded them that it had been previously preached in America at a very distant epoch, and that their ancient creeds bore profound traces of it.

Up to a certain point, we may be permitted to believe that it was less one dogma that replaced another, than a new ceremonial substituted for an old one; for to at least the great majority of

Indians, the external forms of worship were, and still are, religion itself. Catholic worship presents them with ceremonies which are the delight of the lower classes of the Indian people. By their pomp and splendour, the festivals of the Catholic Church are, in all Spanish America, a great relaxation and even amusement. The addition of what, among a more advanced people, would be considered as a blamable alloy, is there tolerated—fireworks, for example, dances, and even parodies. Everywhere, with the view of better establishing religion, the Catholic rites have assumed a character suitable to the country to which they have been transplanted. "In the Philippine and Ladrone islands," says Humboldt, "the populations of Malay race have mixed them up with their own peculiar ceremonies. In the province of Pasto, on the top of the cordilleras of the Andes, I have seen Indians masked, and ornamented with small bells, execute savage dances around the altar, whilst a monk of St. Francis raised the host."

A certain number of Indians were admitted to holy orders. The men willingly adopted an ecclesiastical life, especially that of a parish priest, and Indian girls consented still more willingly

to enter convents. The priests taken from the ranks of the Indians possessed very little instruction. The seminaries in which they were educated could only present very indifferent teaching: it was, in fact, confined to the dogmatical and theological knowledge which is indispensable for the exercise of the sacred ministry.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE WHITE POPULATION BORN IN MEXICO WAS TREATED.

THERE was in Mexico another part of the population whom the ties of complete affinity ought to have made dear to the Spaniards—I mean the Creoles, or Whites born in Mexico, in whose veins Spanish blood flowed unmixed. Let us give a succinct account of the condition in which they were placed under Spanish domination.

With respect to this population, rules were adopted which appeared well drawn up, and skilful, but which contained a radical vice—public liberties were completely absent from them. Each of the States of Europe which had founded great establishments in the New World, had modelled them on its own institutions. Thus, in the English colonies, the genius of the mother country, which could not do

without deliberative assemblies, obtained a certain degree of satisfaction. Nothing of the kind existed in the Spanish colonies, when once they had obtained a regular organization. Nowhere else in America were the inhabitants of European origin kept in a state of such political nullity; and that was because nowhere else in Europe was absolute power carried to the same extent as in the Peninsula. No government professed and practised so far as the Spanish the opinion that peoples are minors, and that the exercise of their free will is contrary to the rights of the sovereign, and fatal to their own interests, even if it be not a sort of rebellion against Divine Providence. Assuredly in France, from the time of Louis XIV., absolute power existed in the manner the most offensive to public reason, and to the dignity of the people, both in the designs of the government and in the forms employed by it. The conclusion of the edicts of the French kings, "*for such is our good pleasure*," affords, in conjunction with various maxims historians have collected, proof that the royal government entertained on the subject of its prerogative an idea which was exaggerated to the height of absurdity. But in France, the absolute power of the king was tempered not

only by *chansons*, as was then said, but also by a certain force of public opinion, which the *Parlements*, notwithstanding the narrowness of their minds and their selfishness, contributed not a little to keep alive, and by the persevering efforts of writers who constantly claimed the rights of human intelligence. In Spain, the Inquisition broke down all resistance, and organized in the regions of thought the silence of the tomb. The only homage which liberty received in the Peninsula was a few protests that lay buried in the ulcerated hearts of generous men.

The policy of the Spanish Government in Mexico, and in its other possessions, presented the same leading characteristics that one finds in all systematic tyrannies: to divide in order to reign; to keep alive dissensions among different classes, especially those which had the greatest means of influence; to restrain and enchain intelligence; to confine man in the narrow limits of his individuality, in which he is necessarily weak, and to interdict association; finally, to centralize the government, so that the complete exercise of it was reserved to the direct agents of the mother country. It was also a rule to keep the colonies isolated one from another—from the fear that they might seek, by a

common effort, the means of respiring more freely.

The following are the terms in which M. Lucas Alaman, who, however, is very indulgent in judging the government of the Spaniards in Mexico, describes the manner in which intellectual productions were treated throughout Spanish America:—"The power of printing was not only subjected, as in Spain, to the surveillance of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities; but nothing could be printed without the permission of each of them, and that permission was not accorded until after an examination of the manuscript by persons specially commissioned for the purpose, and until after they had certified that it contained nothing contrary to the dogmas of the Holy Roman Church, to the prerogatives of his Majesty, and to public morality. Moreover, no work treating of the affairs of America was allowed to be printed without the approbation of the Council of the Indies. Orders were even given to withdraw from circulation all that had been issued without the fulfilment of this condition. These restrictions were observed with so much rigour, that Clavigero, an ecclesiastic, and an inoffensive man, could not obtain permission for his 'History of

Mexico' to be printed in Castilian in the Peninsula; and he was obliged to get it translated into Italian, and printed in Italy. The works relative to America, published in Spain or foreign countries, could not be delivered in the colonies without a similar permission. In order that these severe rules might be observed, and that the admission into the colonies of 'all books treating of profane or fabulous matters or romances,' might be prevented, the contents of every work embarked for that destination had to be inscribed on the ship's register; and ecclesiastical superintendents and officers of the Crown were required to visit vessels on their arrival, to receive the books. And then came the examination of the Inquisition. There was afterwards some relaxation in these rules, but not in the last one."

One of the precautions which the Spanish Government considered particularly efficacious in maintaining its domination in the colonies, was an absolute preference for the natives of Spain, to the exclusion of the white Creoles. The Spaniards, properly so called, thus formed a caste apart, to which even their own children were not allowed to belong:—for the simple reason, that the latter first saw the light in

Mexico, they were suspected and placed under ban. To the natives of the Peninsula, and to them alone, were reserved political, administrative, and judicial offices. That this unnatural plan, which separated the father from the children, and even the brother from the brother, when one was born in Spain, and the other in Mexico, should have been adopted by the Cabinet of Madrid as a system of government easy to maintain, need not occasion much surprise, for when carried beyond a certain point, despotism indulges in the strangest illusions: it thinks everything possible, and it deduces with a sort of simplicity the consequences of its bad principle.

The Creoles long seemed resigned to this absence of all influence in the government and administration of their country; it was like property which men abstain from claiming because they do not know of its existence. They were kept strangers to the rest of the world because they were allowed to read only books approved of by the Inquisition. They did not suspect that the thing called political liberty existed anywhere in the world. In their ignorance, they were persuaded that the narrow circle composing their horizon was the boundary

of the view, the hopes, and the felicity of all mankind. Life, however, was for them not unmixed with certain joys. They enriched themselves by working the mines, or cultivating the soil, which was not less profitable. They indulged in simple pleasures. The government did not neglect, by the employment of baubles, to satisfy one of the passions which occupies the greatest place in the heart of man—vanity. Titles of nobility were accorded to some of them who had realized large fortunes. Another distinction which was lucrative to the treasury, or to the private coffers of the Viceroy, was largely distributed—commissions in the militia—and the wealthy considered themselves happy in paying dear for them. The foreigner who by chance was permitted to traverse Spanish America, was surprised to see in the little towns all the traders transformed into colonels, captains, or sergeant-majors, and even occasionally to find these militia officers, in full uniform, gravely seated in their shops weighing sugar, coffee, or vanilla—"a singular union," says Von Humboldt, "of ostentation and of simplicity of manners."

The independence of the continental colonies of England, however, who formed themselves into

a federal republic under the name of the United States, awoke from their intellectual slumber the more intelligent classes both in Mexico and everywhere else on the New Continent. This great event, which occurred at their very gates, and the renown of which resounded through the world, filled the Creoles with astonishment, and opened to their imagination perspectives which they had not previously known. At a later period the great prosperity of the United States, and the part they began to play in the world, made them reflect still more. They sought for European books, especially those of the innovators most in fashion, and as they had plenty of money, they procured them in spite of the watchfulness of the Inquisition; after which they devoured them in secret, assimilating what was bad in them as well as what was good. The revolution that transformed the continental colonies of England in America, and made them the Republic of the United States, was not the only one that contributed to the awakening of the Mexicans, and made them incline to political innovations. The French revolution of 1789, which broke out like thunder, resounding in all parts of the world, caused in Mexico, as in all

other places, strong emotions in the classes who had received some intellectual cultivation. It was thus that the Mexican Creoles acquired, little by little, a more correct notion of their rights. A mysterious agitation spread. And how did the Spanish authorities of the New World treat this new disposition of public opinion? They employed the coercive measures which governments stricken with vertigo consider a panacea. "They saw," says Humboldt, "the germ of revolt in all the associations of which the object was the spread of enlightenment; they prohibited the establishment of printing-offices in towns of from forty to fifty thousand inhabitants; they considered that peaceable citizens who lived retired in the country, and read in secret the works of Montesquieu, Robertson, and Rousseau, were tainted with revolutionary ideas. When war was declared between Spain and the French Republic, they thrust into dungeons unfortunate Frenchmen who had resided for twenty or thirty years in Mexico. One of these Frenchmen, fearing that he would be made the victim of the barbarous *auto-da-fé*, committed suicide in the prison of the Inquisition. His body was buried in the Quemadero which was set apart to

these odious executions. At the same epoch the local government thought it discovered a conspiracy at Santa Fé, capital of the kingdom of New Granada. "It placed in irons individuals who, in trading with the Isle of San Domingo, had obtained copies of French newspapers. It condemned to torture young men of sixteen, in order to wring from them secrets of which they knew nothing." How could such brutal and insensate policy fail to bring down an exemplary chastisement on its authors?

The Court of Spain had received, shortly before this epoch, a warning, which time proved to be prophetic, from one of the statesmen who has left the best reputation in its annals—Count de Aranda. He took part, as representative of the Cabinet of Madrid, in negotiating the treaty of Paris of 1783, which established the independence of the United States. After this act, which he regretted, he wrote a letter to Charles III., sketching with admirable sagacity the great future reserved to the new Republic. "It is now," he said, "a pigmy; but before long it will be a giant, a formidable colossus in the New World. "It will forget," he continued, "the immense service which France and Spain have rendered to it, for it is to them that it owes its

independence, and will only occupy itself with its own greatness. The liberty of conscience it has proclaimed, the certainty which industrious men will have of gaining a patrimony in that vast territory, and the peculiar advantages of the political institutions established there, will attract to the Confederation, from all parts of the civilized world, an intelligent and laborious population, and we shall have the mortification of seeing it exercise an exclusive and tyrannical sway in the New World." After these predictions, which time has verified almost in every point, De Aranda announced the policy of conquest which the United States would one day adopt towards Spanish America, and the facilities which, under the organization of the latter, the North Americans would possess in order to accomplish their ambitious projects against the territories placed in proximity to them, and separated from the mother country by the Atlantic: "They will begin by taking Florida, which will make them masters of the Gulf of Mexico, and afterwards they will attack the beautiful empire of New Spain." He pointed out with no less foresight the success of ideas of independence among the inhabitants of

the Spanish possessions of the New World. Those populations were, he said, badly governed, and were destined so to be as long as they should be abandoned to authorities subjected to no control, except that of the mother country, placed at a great distance. It was a law of Nature that such vast territories should not remain indefinitely under the dependence of distant States. It was therefore necessary, if not to try to prevent a separation which appeared inevitable, at least to regulate and soften the consequences of it. It was to attain this object that he proposed to the king a plan, which he represented as the result of long meditation. The Crown of Spain should retain in North America only the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico, and in South America a post as far as possible correspondent. It should grant independence to all the Continent in this form: Three thrones should be erected, and each be occupied by an Infante of Spain—one in Mexico, the other in Peru, the third in the Mainland The King of Spain should take the title of Emperor, and keep grouped around his throne these three monarchies by every tie possible—a political alliance offensive and defensive, commercial

relations on the basis of entire reciprocity, and marriages between the sovereign families. In acknowledgment of the independence thus accorded, Mexico was to have paid to the mother country an annual tribute in bars of silver, the production of its mines; Peru one in ingots of gold; and the Mainland in its natural productions, particularly tobacco. The programme of Count de Aranda would probably not have attained the perpetual existence which the illustrious statesman hoped for it, but it would have spared Spain, and particularly her colonies, cruel trials. In any case it attests the perspicacity of the author, and does honour to his patriotism and to the elevation of his ideas. Count de Aranda expressed himself like a man who understood the beneficial influence which liberal institutions exercise over the condition of nations and the power of states. It does not appear that the Court of Spain took these sage counsels into serious consideration. What is certain is that it did not act on them. Events, however, soon demonstrated how opportune they were. In New Granada, Venezuela, and Peru, the sentiment of independence gradually gained ardent proselytes, and attempts at insur-

rection were made.* In Mexico the movement was confined to some obscure conspiracies, almost all concocted by uninfluential Spaniards, which were stifled without difficulty before they could explode; but the fire smouldered beneath the cinders, until at last it burst forth into a conflagration.

* One of the chief insurgents who gained notice, and who went into exile when the insurrection was put down—Miranda—served as a general in the armies of the French Republic.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF THE SPANIARDS IN MEXICO.

THE economic system established in Mexico, and in the other Spanish colonies, was that which was practised three hundred years ago by all the States of Europe towards their possessions in the New World. It was the belief of those times that colonies existed for the exclusive advantage of the mother country, were entitled to trade only with it, and to have no other industries than those that suited its monopoly. Thus, it was a principle that certain manufactures should be forbidden to them, in order that they might present a safe market to the productions of the mother country. England, which, however, accorded to her colonies much greater liberty than other States, was almost as

rigorous on this point as the Castillian kings. It was, for example, proposed to the Parliament to prohibit the inhabitants of Pennsylvania, for the advantage of English ironworks, from smelting the iron ores which that province contained in abundance. It was also a maxim of that historical epoch, that colonies ought to be hermetically closed against the rest of the world. Spain applied in excess the principles commonly admitted at that epoch, and persevered in them without any change, or nearly so, after other States had mitigated the rigour of them. Almost all manufactured articles had to be brought from the mother country. The head of a family was allowed to manufacture in his house only ordinary articles, necessary for his servants. Admission into the country was prohibited to foreigners, especially to those whom it was feared would spread innovating ideas among the inhabitants. Humboldt had to obtain a royal authorization, and to seek for it personally at Aranjuez, in order to be able to make in the Spanish colonies his great exploration of the equinoctial regions, which has been so profitable to science. With the greatest candour in the world, M. Lucas Alaman (who, notwithstanding a degree of information rare among the Mexicans,

remained to the end imbued with the decrepit maxims of the old mother country) has, in his vast work on the "Independence of Mexico," expressed the regret that Humboldt was allowed to collect materials for his "Political Essay on New Spain," a book as remarkable for the sage moderation of the reflections presented relative to the organization of society in Spanish America, as for the profusion of scientific instruction it contains. According to M. Alaman, this excellent work contributed to create the movement in favour of independence in Mexico, by giving the Mexicans "an excessive idea of the wealth of their country," from which, he says, "they pictured to themselves that, once independent, Mexico would be the most powerful nation of the universe."

Commerce, even with the mother country and the other Spanish possessions, was only permitted through two ports—that of Vera Cruz for Spain, and that of Acapulco for the Philippines, by which communication took place with China. Only two towns in all Spain—Cadiz and Seville—could carry on trade with Mexico; and the merchants of those places did not give themselves much trouble with respect to that great colony. Every three or four years, not oftener,

a certain number of vessels freighted with merchandize, sailed together from Cadiz, under the designation of *The Fleet.* All that they carried out was sold in advance to six or eight firms in Mexico, who thus exercised a monopoly. On the arrival of the fleet from Cadiz, a great fair was held at Xalapa, and the supply of an empire was provided like that of a blockaded town. Smuggling, it is true, corrected a little this restrictive system. It was facilitated by the privilege accorded to England under the name of *asiento*, of sending every year into Spanish America a vessel of five hundred tons burden filled with slaves. Frauds were committed in the cargo of the vessel, and the still bolder fraud of sending several vessels instead of one, was practised. It was only in 1778 that part of the framework of these monopolies, piled one on the other, was thrown down by a reform which extended to all Spanish America, and of which the honour belongs to King Charles III. This reform, which has been decorated with the pompous name of liberty of trade, consisted in allowing fourteen ports of Spain to trade directly with the colonies of the New World, through certain ports, very few in number, which were expressly designated. Foreigners remained excluded, and

yet the effects produced by the new commercial system were considerable, as all documents testify. As to the trade with Asia by Acapulco and the Philippines, it was confined, so long as Spain remained the mistress of Mexico, to one single vessel a year, called the *galion*, a vessel of fifteen hundred tons, commanded by an officer of the royal navy.

Spanish despotism was manifested in a multitude of regulations sent direct from Madrid, and which the viceroys could not change. It was the Council of the Indies, to which, at Madrid, all colonial affairs were confided, that drew up these regulations, and we must believe that the council was animated by good intentions; but they were prepared without a sufficient knowledge of the people to whom they were to be applied, and what is still more to be regretted, they were conceived and combined with that spirit of minuteness, which asserts the impossible pretension of foreseeing everything, and which is the negation of free-will among the governed. Being in that respect contrary to human nature, they oppressed the populations, and prevented them from engaging in productive business. Volumes would not suffice to expose the acts of bad administration, the fatal restrictions

on the spirit of enterprise, the excessive control, the decisions dictated by favour, the indefinite delays of the administrative system practised by Spain in the New World. In order to complete this picture of all the embarrassments and all the annoyances which the industrious man met with, we must add the exactions that were made by the functionaries. The viceroys enriched themselves by the arbitrary distribution of quicksilver among the workers in the mines; other agents made fortunes by smuggling, and others by oppressing the Indians. Even when the officials were animated with good and upright sentiments, the principles of the Government they served were so radically bad that they had for effect—even when it was desired that they should do good—of sacrificing certain elements of colonial prosperity. I will cite examples of this principally from M. Lucas Alaman, who presents them, without, however, dissimulating his indulgence for the defunct government of the mother country, and who, even in certain cases, exposes them with the idea of its rehabilitation.

In the seventeenth century, when Mexico was far from possessing the wealth she has since attained, and when Peru herself was not what she afterwards became, there was some com-

merce between the two kingdoms of New Spain and Peru. The province of Puebla manufactured a great quantity of stuffs for Peru, particularly of cotton.* On all the line from the town of Puebla to that of Cholula were cotton manufactories. Representations were made at the Court of Madrid, that under colour of this commerce between the two colonies, the Dutch and the English smuggled into Peru Chinese stuffs, which they declared to be of Mexican manufacture. Any other government would have sought for and would have found—a not very difficult thing—the means of preventing this irregular commerce of the English and the Dutch. But the Council of the Indies acted differently. In order to put down smuggling, it limited cargoes from Mexico to Peru to two vessels, which were not to carry fabrics to more than the value of 200,000 ducats (24,000*l.*). At a later period, the Government decided that the stuffs imported should be of certain determined qualities, and eventually it absolutely prohibited trade between the two colonies. Peru, on its part, sent wines to other Spanish possessions, particularly to the province of Gua-

* The reader has learnt that cotton is indigenous in Mexico.

temala; no doubt Peru had, as a favour, been allowed to cultivate vines, though that was forbidden elsewhere. The wines were demanded by the Indian population of Central America; but after a while, it was seen that the Indians made too copious libations, and became intoxicated; and so from interest for them the wines of Peru were prohibited in the Government of Guatemala.

Manufactories of woven stuffs were established, as we have said, in some of the colonies, more particularly in Mexico, because hands were more numerous, and had a tendency to increase; but the idea of protecting the Indians created an impediment. It was represented that the heads of manufactories had committed or might commit abuses towards the native population who worked or might work for them. Accordingly, by successive laws, the Council of the Indies continuously thwarted the establishment of manufactories. The local authorities were authorized to close them whenever they thought they had sufficient motives, based on interest for the Indians, so to do. In such cases, the viceroys and the *audiencias* were even empowered to demolish the manufactory, and to inflict penalties on manufacturers personally. It will be

conceived that, under such circumstances, enterprising men were but little disposed to erect such establishments.

Without being too much inclined to think evil of one's neighbour, we may believe that the Council of the Indies, when it drew up such unintelligent laws, was not indifferent to the idea of securing a market for the wines and stuffs of the Peninsula, and that the interest of the Indians, which was alleged, was only a pretext. There is, however, one fact which seems to authorize the contradiction which M. Lucas Alaman gives to this supposition. According to him, the principal, and even the sole motive of these abusive restrictions, was kindness to the Indians, as stated in official documents. As a proof, he remarks that the cultivation of a plant, from which the Indians made an intoxicating liquor, was prohibited in Guatemala, for the sake of their health. This prohibition, he says, could have nothing in common with the protectionist system, since the cultivation referred to was not carried on in Spain. It is true, that the protectionist system had nothing to do with the special fact cited by M. Alaman, but it does not follow that it had nothing to do with the measures I have recapitulated, and

of which I might have extended the list. The Spanish Government loved the Indians, in its way, but it loved the prohibitive system at least as much.

After all, when we have to pronounce on the economic system imposed by Spain on her colonies, the question is not whether the measures, of which we have given some examples, were dictated by this or that notion, but whether they were in themselves judicious and civilizing; whether they promoted the development of the Spanish colonies, or whether, on the contrary, they did not check the growth of them. They were fatal, because they depended on the policy which prohibits use, in order to prevent abuse—a policy which is the negation of liberty, and which, so to speak, drags backwards the car of reason and progress. It is therefore not easy to see what the renown of the old Spanish Government can gain by the explanation of its apologists. What results, on the contrary, is its condemnation—is the explanation of the general insurrection which overthrew it not only in America, but in the Peninsula.*

* This is perhaps the place to remark that the French colonial system was, down to these latter times, marked with the same vice we reproach in the Spanish Govern-

The *beau idéal* of this system was the design, warmly supported by numerous persons, but from the accomplishment of which the government shrank, of forbidding the cultivation of the *banana* in Spanish America, in order, as was said, to make the Indians of the hot districts more industrious. The defenders of this project, according to what M. Von Humboldt says, reasoned nearly in this way:—The banana is a plant which feeds man with the greatest facility; therefore it encourages Indians in habits of idleness; therefore it is a scourge; and therefore it must be extirpated. This

ment. The prohibitive spirit was there displayed in the largest proportions, for the pretended interest of the mother country. Commerce between one colony and another was prohibited, or surrounded with restrictions which were the equivalent of prohibition. And less than two years ago this abusive system remained nearly intact. After the Treaty of Commerce with England, the liberal system of political economy which at last prevailed in France, was applied to the colonies, in so far as to open them to foreign commerce, which was done by the law of 3rd July, 1861. Moreover, that law happily modified the legislation on inter-colonial commerce. Spain had many years before profoundly changed the commercial system of the colonies which remained to her—the Philippines, Cuba, and Porto Rico. On the whole, compared to her, France was much behind-hand.

project, which openly and premeditatedly tended to render difficult the feeding of the people, was, very luckily for the population, impracticable. In Mexico alone, twenty or thirty thousand functionaries would have been required to watch cultivation, and root up the hostile plant in the deep valleys that, throughout the whole length of the country, cut the double inclined plane which, as we shall show in another part of this essay (Part V. chap. 1), is placed between the immense table-land constituting the interior, and the coasts of the Atlantic and Pacific. That number would have constituted an army, the pay of which would have ruined Mexican finances. Besides, there are things against which humanity and common sense protest with so much force that they are impossible. And this would have been of the number.

If it had been desired to cure the Indians of the apathy to which they abandoned themselves, a plan was clearly indicated: it consisted not in depriving them of the banana, which would have augmented their misery, but in granting them civil liberty, by means of which their intellectual and moral qualities would have been strengthened, and their desire of comfort would have been augmented by the hope which, having

become free, they might have conceived of attaining it. It was necessary, according to the advice of the respectable Bishop of the diocese of Michoacan, to abolish the perpetual minority which had been imposed on them for their good, to let them reside where they pleased, to divide among them the collective property of the villages, and a portion of the crown lands which remained uncultivated.* It was necessary, besides, to instruct them seriously, and, in a word, to employ the means which are well known to possess the virtue of encouraging labour, and by labour of promoting the people's welfare.

Here is another example calculated to show into what contradictions and what embarrassments men fall, and how much evil they drag after them, when they abandon themselves entirely to a system of regulation, and to absolute centralization. In the supposed interest of the Indians, they were confined, as we have said, to villages closed against Europeans. Limited to a narrow

* The Bishop of Michoacan went farther—he demanded "an agrarian law similar to that of the Asturias and Galicia, where it is permitted to the poor farmer, under certain conditions, to clear the lands which the large owners have left uncultivated for centuries, to the detriment of national industry."

space (less than three furlongs in circuit), the natives, so to speak, had no individual property; they were bound to cultivate the lands of the community. The produce of these communal lands was farmed out by the intendants, who thought they did well in so doing. The revenue thus obtained was poured into the royal treasury, on account, as was said, of each village; but when it was necessary to dispose of these funds, a sort of impassable barrier was raised, consisting in endless formalities and delays. One regulation prohibited intendants from disposing in favour of villages, by their own authority, of such funds, once paid into the royal treasury; it was necessary previously to solicit and obtain special permission from the Superior Council of Finance of Mexico. This council demanded reports from different functionaries, who did not hurry themselves to make them; years passed away in collecting documents, and the Indians, wearied out, abandoned their demands. The Spanish authorities had become so accustomed to consider this money of the Indian villages as a sum without destination, that at the time of M. Von Humboldt's visit the intendant of Valladolid sent to Madrid nearly 40,000*l.* of it, which had been

collected in the space of two years; and he represented to the king that it was a free and patriotic gift, which the Indians of Michoacan were too happy to offer to his Majesty, to aid him in continuing the war against England.

I do not, however, affirm that there was nothing but evil in the economic or administrative measures which were taken by Spain, or which she authorized. Absolute evil no more exists in this world than absolute good. Good has always a place, small or great, in the heart of man and in his acts; it is even not rare that, in virtue of a superior law, political systems, even when they are based on a bad principle, produce some good effects. It would be unjust not to render homage to the generous and enlightened projects of Charles III., relative to the government of the Spanish possessions in the New World. The system which he wished to establish there was a salutary one. If he did not sufficiently change the basis of institutions, he made efforts which were generally successful, to prevent the abuses of the existing system, and to introduce serious improvements. After he had been succeeded on the throne by a good and upright prince, but of radical incapacity, his ideas survived in the New Continent by the force

of things, or, to speak more clearly, because the genius of political and social progress, having taken its spring in Europe, endeavoured to make its influence felt in all the parts of the world to which the spirit of European civilization had penetrated; and it succeeded more or less, except in places in which the retrograde system had employed all its resources completely to paralyze the intelligence and activity of populations. In the two principal commercial centres of Mexico, the capital and Vera Cruz, the wish for public reforms was, at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, stronger than in the Peninsula itself. Whilst the detestable administration of the favourite, Godoy, powerless to throw off retrograde traditions, and to promote the innovations which are justly dear to modern civilization, allowed everything to perish in Spain, the Spaniards established in the principal towns of Mexico, and especially in the two I have just named, made strong efforts to fecundate the germs of prosperity with which nature had enriched the country. Each of these cities, and with them a third one, that of Guadalaxara, had a *Consulado*—a body which would be similar to the Chambers and Tribunals of Commerce of France, supposing

the latter united to the former, and possessing, under the control of the viceroy, more extensive attributes than those which would exist in France by the concentration of the two assemblies into one. The Consulados levied taxes either for the king or themselves; they drew up plans of roads and other public works, and carried them into execution. The traders who composed the Consulado of Mexico and that of Vera Cruz, nearly all natives of the Peninsula, displayed in behalf of the public interest an intelligent activity which would have been repressed in the mother country. To that of Mexico was due the completion* of one of the boldest enterprises in the New World in the eighteenth century—the *Desaguë* or canal of Huehuetoca—destined to carry off the surplus water of the lakes, in order to preserve Mexico from the inundations which visited it periodically. A cutting in it was much admired, because it had no equal in

* The *Desaguë* works were commenced almost at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in 1607. The enterprise, though supposed to be terminated, was really unfinished in 1767, when the Consulado of Mexico took it in hand. It was completed in 1789. The Consulado promised to finish it in five years, but the difficulties were greater than had been anticipated, and at that time the people in Mexico were not very expert in canal-works.

Europe* until this latter time, in which, in the construction of railways, it has been necessary to employ means previously unknown in the history of roads and canals. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth, the Consulado of Mexico redoubled its zeal in useful enterprises. It constructed beautiful public edifices in the capital, among them the Custom-house, and commenced a road of vital importance to the country, that from Mexico to Vera Cruz by Orizaba, with a branch to Oaxaca, and consequently towards the Pacific Ocean. The Consulado of Vera Cruz, rivalling with that of Mexico, undertook at the same epoch to join Mexico to Vera Cruz by Xalapa, and it constructed with Roman solidity a magnificent roadway, rising from the level of the sea to a height of more than 7700 feet at Perote. It moreover constructed a light-house, which for the epoch was a very good one, in the fort of San Juan de Ulua; and it built in the port of Vera Cruz a mole capable of resisting the extreme violence of the north-west winds. It improved the hospitals; and it took measures

* For the length of more than two miles it had a depth of ninety-eight feet.

for supplying the town with drinkable water, the want of which contributed not a little to give great intensity to the yellow fever.

In addition to these works, executed by corporations composed of natives of Spain, a class of the community of which Creoles formed the great majority, the workers of silver-mines, were authorized, in 1774, to form an association under the name of La Mineria. A small percentage of the silver extracted from each mine was awarded to it, and owing to the development of the working, secured it abundant resources.

The Minéria proposed to itself various objects of public utility; and, first of all, the reform of the laws relative to mining, which it obtained in 1783. It endeavoured to spread in the country the special knowledge required in the working of mines and the treatment of ores. It founded, with that object, a Mining College at Mexico, and organized it with care. It had twenty-five scholarships for young men of White race or of the Indian nobility, and an indefinite number of paying pupils. It erected in Mexico an elegant edifice, which, however, was not sufficiently strong to resist the not very violent but repeated shocks of earthquake with which the city is visited. It made advances to miners, but did

not display in the distribution of its loans the discernment and spirit of order that were required. It thus effected loans beyond its means, and ended by a bankruptcy of 4,000,000 piastres (840,000*l.*). The public drew a comparison between the management of the Mineria and that of the Consulados of Mexico and Vera Cruz; and the Spaniards concluded, therefore, that they understood the management of public affairs better than the Creoles.

The government of Charles III. was favourable to the sciences, and at Mexico they were cultivated with success, even in the higher branches, as that of astronomy. Humboldt cites as men of scientific attainments Alzate and Gama, and especially Velasquez, who possessed genius. The latter, though born of a poor family, and an orphan at the tender age of four, was a self-taught man, and he employed prodigious efforts in acquiring knowledge. He rendered very eminent services of different kinds to his country.*

* "When the Abbé Chappe, more celebrated for his courage and his devotedness to science than for the exactness of his writings, arrived in California, he found the Mexican astronomer already established there. Velasquez had built for himself, of planks of mimosa, an observatory

At Guanajuato, the intendant Riagno effected important improvements. Even in secondary towns the spirit of amendment was manifested by useful foundations. At Xalapa, for example, a good school of design was maintained by the wealthier inhabitants, and it gave elementary instruction to artizans. A school of painting and sculpture, established at Mexico, produced most satisfactory results. The sculptor, Tolsa, designed and cast in bronze an equestrian statue of King Charles III., and foreign connoisseurs who visit it in the place in which it has been sequestered since the fall of the Spanish sway still admire it. Notwithstanding the numerous

at Santa Anna. Having determined the position of that Indian village, he announced to the Abbé Chappe that the eclipse of the moon of the 18th June, 1769, would be visible in California. The French mathematician doubted the assertion until the announced eclipse took place. Velasquez alone made very correct observations of the transit of Venus across the sun's disc, on the 3rd June, 1769. He communicated the result the day after the transit to the Abbé Chappe and to the Spanish astronomers, Don Vincente Doz, and Don Salvador de Medina. The French traveller was surprised at the harmony between Velasquez's observation and his own. He was no doubt astonished at meeting in California with a Mexican, who, without belonging to any Academy, or having ever left New Spain, did as much as Academicians."—HUMBOLDT'S "Essay on New Spain."

and profound vices of the system which prevailed in the Government the population increased, the welfare of the people progressed in a great many localities, and even enlightenment began to spread. But the progress was not rapid enough for men of eminent intelligence; and the permanency of institutions condemned by reason wounded the sentiments of the inhabitants, who knew something of Europe and of the bases on which modern civilization is founded.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEXICAN CLERGY.

We must describe the situation which the clergy occupied in the colony of New Spain. In every civilized country, the clergy constitute a power of the first order, and in most Catholic countries, down at least to these later times, it may be said to be superior to all others.

In a country organized by Spaniards, we instinctively expect to see the clergy enjoying ample powers, and possessing very great influence. Such was, in fact, the case, but not, however, so much so as may be believed. The kings of Spain, or the administrative councils which governed under them, understood the warning presented by the state of things in the Peninsula, where they were no longer the masters. In consequence, for the sake of their

own power, they were more circumspect in their possessions beyond the seas. They gave there to religious authority a large part in the government, but they did not abandon to it the reins of the State.

From the beginning, before Mexico was conquered, and even before the existence of it was suspected, the husband of the great Isabella, Ferdinand—a prince more far-seeing and more really able than Philip II., who came after him—took precautions against the encroachments of religious on royal authority in the dependencies of the Crown beyond the seas; and he did so apparently to compensate the sacrifices which were made to the Papacy in the Peninsula itself. The government of the Church in the Indies was rendered entirely independent, not only of the Church in Spain, but of the Tribunal of the Rota, and of all nunciature, that is to say, of the Court of Rome—that government being expressly delegated to the Catholic kings by an act of Pope Julius II., in 1508. The appeals, which in the Peninsula were made to the Holy Apostolic See, were in the colonies made from one episcopal see to another. The king nominated the bishops, and the latter, by the mere fact of that nomination, were invested with

the government of dioceses. The Council of the Indies, sitting at Madrid, had the power to authorize or refuse pontifical bulls and briefs in the possessions beyond the seas. It was through it that all demands from the colonies to the Court of Rome were to be addressed, and it could stop them if it pleased. The acts of the Provincial Councils could not take effect until after they had been sanctioned by the same Council, and could not be published without its authorization. The Court of Spain, in order to render still more complete the independence of the Churches of the Indies as regards the Holy See, wished to place them under the direction of a patriarch, of whom it was to have the choice. But the Court of Rome, which likes to see such dignitaries nowhere, because their extensive powers give it umbrage, would not lend its hand to the establishment of such a high office. As, however, the Court of Madrid insisted, a compromise was come to, which consisted in confiding to one and the same person the functions of Grand Almoner of the Crown at Madrid, and those of Vicar-General of Spain and the Indies, with the title and the honours of the Cardinalate, but without being a Patriarch.

Immediately after the conquest, a great many

priests and monks were needed in New Spain, since they had to catechize a people spread over an immense surface, and to keep them in religious practices after being converted. A great many religious houses were accordingly founded; they were for the two sexes, and there was a superabundance of each. The *ayuntamiento* (municipality) of Mexico, a corporation which was always independent, made this the subject of a petition to King Philip IV., in 1644. It prayed the king to check the indefinite increase of communities of monks and nuns, remarking that the number of convents was in particular excessive, and that of nuns still more exorbitant. It demanded that a limit should be assigned to the amount of property held by convents, and even that they should be prevented from acquiring more. It complained that the greater part of the territorial domains had become, either by donations or purchase, the property of the religious orders, and affirmed that if no obstacle were raised, all the land in Mexico would soon be theirs. It recommended that no more priests should be sent from the Peninsula, and that the Mexican bishops should be ordered to postpone further ordinations. It remarked, that there were already in the country more than six thousand

priests who had nothing to do, and who had been ordained on pretext of serving insignificant chapels. Finally, it demanded a diminution in the number of holidays, which were excessive, and which gave a pretext for idleness, and for all the vices that idleness occasions.

A sort of Cortes, which was accidentally assembled at Mexico at about the same time, presented a similar wish; and the same opinion, according to M. Alaman, is said to have been expressed by the Council of Castille, which was the superior council of the Government at Madrid, but which did not decide on American affairs, the latter devolving on the Council of the Indies. M. Alaman says that the Spanish Government took no heed of these representations. It was therefore the natural course of things, and the spontaneous change of vocations that caused the diminution in the number of persons embraced in the religious orders, which was noticed at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

When M. Von Humboldt explored the country, the clergy was only composed of 10,000 monks and nuns; adding the lay brothers, or servants, and the lay sisters—that is, the simple servants not in orders—there were only from 13,000 to 14,000 persons, a

number less than that of Franciscan monks alone in Spain. The Spanish clergy, at the same epoch, consisted of 177,000 persons, or 16 per 1000 of the inhabitants; whilst in New Spain the number was less than 2.

The wealth of the clergy was considerable. On this point, however, the best authorities are not in accord. Humboldt, relying on a document which emanated in 1805 from the inhabitants of Valladolid, says that the real property of the clergy was then only from 12,000,000 frs. to 15,000,000 frs. (480,000*l.* to 600,000*l.*); whilst the personal property, consisting of dotations and the funds of pious works, amounted to 234,000,000 frs. (9,360,000*l.*). The sum is large, assuredly; it appears, however, much beneath the reality. M. Alaman, who wrote long after Humboldt, and who had in his hands all the information which a long participation in the government enabled him to collect, affirms that the property, real and personal, of the Mexican clergy could not, at the time of Humboldt's visit, be estimated at less than half the value of all the real property of the country.

The clergy, moreover, levied tithes, which annually amounted to about 10,000,000 frs. (400,000*l.*).

The wealth of the clergy was very unequally divided among its members; some prelates were extravagantly paid, and many parish priests were reduced to a modest stipend. The Archbishop of Mexico had a revenue of 700,000 frs. (28,000*l.*); the Bishop of Valladolid one of 550,000 frs. (22,000*l.*); and the priests of Indian villages received only 500 frs. or 600 frs. (20*l.* or 24*l.*).

The capital, properly so called, of the clergy, —its personal property, distinct from lands and houses,—was administered in a very remarkable manner. The Mexican clergy, without troubling itself about antiquated ecclesiastical prescriptions relative to the levying of interest, lent its capital principally to landowners on the guarantee of a mortgage, and on moderate terms. The rate of interest was ordinarily six per cent.—a sum which must be judged, not according to the usages of the markets of Paris and London, but according to what is generally paid in the colonies. The Mexican clergy had thus the management of a sort of mortgage bank, or Crédit Foncier, the capital of which belonged to it. The course of events had naturally led it, so to speak, to assume this financial office, and it fulfilled it with a laudable spirit of forbearance towards the borrowing public. These

loans on mortgage, which generally presented a sufficient guarantee, were ordinarily renewed when they fell due. There was a tacit convention, in virtue of which every landowner who desired a renewal obtained it without objection.

The morality of a part of the Mexican clergy was not very exemplary. It appears that it was less so the greater the distance from the capital. A considerable number of parish priests did not respect the law of celibacy, and often in the villages did not take the trouble to keep secret the connexions they maintained, contrary to the rules of ecclesiastical discipline. As to the public, as has been remarked in other Catholic countries, they conformed themselves externally to the letter without caring for the spirit of religion. They saved appearances, but in secret gave free course to their passions. And yet it must be said in favour of the women of White race, that they were generally good mothers and chaste wives, attentive to the education of their children; though, however, not without extreme indulgence to their sons, whom they were far from making economical and industrious. The religious holidays afforded the inferior classes a pretext for wasting in a day

the fruits of whole months of labour; and, for the higher classes, they were an excuse for luxury and expense. Splendid parties were given, and in them the sensations caused by combats of bulls and cocks were indulged, and frantic gambling with cards took place. This was considered honouring God and the saints. The Viceroy, the Duke de Linares, in a report which he prepared for the guidance of his successor, said justly: "In this country people believe themselves Catholics because they carry a rosary and kiss the hand of a priest; but the observance of the Ten Commandments is a mere formal ceremony."

The intestine division which ranged the whole population into two groups, ready to become factions, and even belligerents—that of the Creoles and that of the Europeans—existed in the clergy. The dignitaries of the Church were chosen by the Crown from among the natives of Spain. Of nine episcopal sees that were established in the country, eight, at the beginning of the century, were occupied by priests born in the Peninsula; only one, that of Puebla, was held by a Creole. The parish priests were all Mexicans, principally Creoles—often, however, Indians. They regarded their superiors with a

jealous eye. The part they played in the insurrection for independence will be seen hereafter.

The opposition between the Creoles and the Spaniards, or *Gachupines*, was manifested in another manner in the ranks of the clergy. Such an order, or such a monastery or convent, was under the banner of the Gachupines, such another under that of the Creoles. These divisions were not calculated to augment the respect which religion ought to inspire among the population.

One of the events which in Mexico marked the history of the clergy, and even that of the country, was the abolition of the Order of the Jesuits, in 1767. This famous Order held the first rank in New Spain, as in all Spanish colonies. It possessed there great wealth, and still greater influence. It was distinguished from other religious communities by being better educated, of more regular conduct, and also by the union and perfect order of which it set the example. It was not divided into Gachupines and Creoles; it was exclusively Apostolic and Roman, and it did not consider that in that quality it had to demand from political in favour of religious authority anything beyond what existed in Mexico. It had neither agitated elections nor noisy meetings; the elective and de-

liberative system was not, indeed, in accordance with the spirit of its institution. It enjoyed great credit among all the classes of the population, and bore a very useful part in the teaching, not only of religion, but of letters and sciences. Its disappearance from the scene of the world was certainly a misfortune for Spanish America, where it was the promoter of civilization.

It is not probable, however, that history will blame the Governments of the great States of Europe which imposed on the Court of Rome the closing of the establishments of Jesuits in that the most civilized part of the world. The influence of the Jesuits then impeded the movement of the world in the path of progress. The Jesuits had taken an active part in the violent and anti-Christian measures by which the Holy See, in accord with certain kings, had succeeded in re-establishing in Europe its authority, which was shaken or overthrown by the Reformation. This Order, the members of which individually were benevolent and mild, had been the accomplice of all the horrors committed by the Inquisition, of all the persecutions of Protestants, and of all the sanguinary attacks on civilization, of which the massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day is the most striking example. It was an assemblage

of men of cultivated minds; and yet it made systematic efforts to maintain gross superstitions, and to accredit miracles which were manifestly false; thereby appearing to have at heart the degradation and the disgrace of public intelligence. The Jesuits committed another fault, that of being in Europe the indefatigable instruments for realizing a hope which, though impossible of success, the Papacy cherished, and which it has not yet renounced—the hope of regaining over kings and peoples the political domination it exercised in the Middle Ages. They have thus justified much of the antipathy felt for them by, among other bodies, the French *Parlements*, which gave them terrible blows, and by the philosophers of the eighteenth century, in whose eyes the pretension of the Holy See to supremacy in the political world was even more culpable than chimerical.

After the first half of the eighteenth century, when a liberal spirit had assumed its ascendancy over men's minds, the Order of the Jesuits had terrible accounts to settle with public opinion and with European civilization. The essential doctrines of the Order were more repugnant than those of any other to the sentiment of independence, which was at last in honour

among men; for it was in direct opposition with the generous spirit which then excited peoples to conquer or regain representative institutions for societies, and guarantees for individuals. Organized in the sixteenth century for the purpose of extirpating the spirit of free inquiry, the Order was the declared antagonist and irreconcilable enemy of liberal ideas. When, then, a century ago, the moment arrived at which the genius of Liberty had to unfold its wings in Europe, the Order of the Jesuits was weighed in the balance of destiny, and found wanting. But in other parts of the world it was still capable of rendering brilliant services. In America, it is probable, it would have drawn from barbarism the native populations, which were still very numerous, although they had been decimated by the conquerors. In the great monarchies of Eastern Asia, it conducted itself with a moderation and ability which would have ended by producing the best fruits in those populous empires, and would, perhaps, have spared the present generations of Europe the task, which it seems they are destined to undertake, of saving them from destruction, and of placing them in regular and harmonious contact with the civilization of the West. Confined to the duties of missionaries

out of Europe, the Jesuits might, then, have been useful auxiliaries for the advancement of mankind. When they disappeared from Mexico, they were not replaced in scholastic establishments; they were only imperfectly replaced in their relations with the Indians; and the example of pure and dignified conduct which they set the clergy was lost.

The clergy were allowed from the first special rights of jurisdiction, and they had besides their *fuero* or legal privilege, in virtue of which ecclesiastical tribunals had the power of trying cases in which one of their members was concerned or accused. But in time these prerogatives were diminished. The political authorities claimed the attributes which belong to them according to the new political law laid down by sovereigns after the Middle Ages. They established in many cases, and particularly in criminal ones, the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals. The viceroy was invested with the power of deciding in each special case whether it should be referred to ecclesiastical or civil jurisdiction. It was on the proposition of Count de Revilla Gigedo that this power was conferred on the viceroys. The intervention of the ecclesiastical authorities was not, however, suppressed, even in the case of crimes

in nowise connected with religion; and the *fuero*, that is the special right of the clergy, remained such that it would not have been impossible to a bishop to suspend the course of justice, if he had willed it. The political authorities would have been disarmed, if they had not possessed the resource, the employment of which is always to be regretted, of deciding difficulties in the style of Alexander, that is by material force. When an ecclesiastic was prosecuted for a crime, it was necessary before sentence was pronounced, and still more before execution was proceeded to, for him to be condemned and degraded by his superiors, and given up by them to the secular arm.

When the parish priest Hidalgo, who was the first to organize the struggle for independence, had been made a prisoner, with the greater part of the staff of the insurgent army, the ecclesiastics, who were numerous among the captives, were placed apart, in order that the investigation of the charges against them might be made separately. The capture took place on the 21st of March, 1811; some of the prisoners who before the insurrection had served in the regular army, and who consequently were specially subject to the rigour of military law, were sum-

marily tried on the spot and shot. This first execution accomplished, all those who were not in orders were sent on to Chihuahua, where they arrived on the 23rd of April. On the 6th of May, a court-martial charged to decide on the fate of this first class of prisoners was formed; the sentence was immediate, and the condemned were shot in batches from the 10th of May. Of Hidalgo, the treatment was different: the bishop of the diocese in which he was arrested, that of Durango, nominated an ecclesiastical commissioner on the 14th of May. But the latter did not consider himself warranted in pronouncing the degradation of the prisoner, and to make him do so a special mandate from the bishop was necessary. The degradation, pronounced on the 27th of July, was solemnly proceeded to, in presence of the people, in the church of the monastery of Saint Francis, at Chihuahua. Thus deprived of the ecclesiastical character, Hidalgo was immediately given up to the secular arm, with a recommendation to clemency, which was only a vain formality. Three days after he was shot.

There remained five other ecclesiastics. Taken almost all like Hidalgo, at the well of Bujan, they were tried by a court-martial with-

out any degradation being pronounced, and were condemned to death. But before the sentence could be executed, it was necessary that ecclesiastical authority should degrade them. The bishop, however, refused to do so. The military authorities were firm; despatches were exchanged, and at last, the general who commanded in the district took on himself the execution of the sentence, in spite of all opposition, and it was carried into effect on the 17th of July, 1812. The document in which he gave his orders to the commanding officers was thus conceived—"The Clerk of the Court will read their sentence to the condemned ecclesiastics who are in your custody. Within twenty-four hours you will carry this sentence into execution: you will have them shot from behind, and will take care not to hit them in the head; you will also previously take off their ecclesiastical garments, and after they are shot will put them on again. In that state you will have the bodies, escorted by all your detachment, conveyed to the sanctuary of Guadalupe, where you will deliver them to the parish priest in order that he may bury them; and you will report the ceremony to me." "This order," says M. Alaman, "was literally obeyed; the tonsure and

the habit of these priests were respected, but they themselves were put to death."

The Inquisition, without which it appeared to the Court of Spain that mankind could not live, was imported into the colonial possessions, and consequently its weight was felt in Mexico. The Mexican Inquisition had in its jurisdiction the Government of Guatemala, the West India Islands, and even the Philippines. It was a dependency on the Supreme Tribunal of the Inquisition at Madrid. It exercised its functions with that gloomy distrustful spirit which was its characteristic. And yet on this point also the royal authority, represented by the viceroys, had found means to make reserves, and to restrict the ecclesiastical power. Count de Revilla Gigedo obtained a decree, that the Mexican Inquisition, before publishing any edict or order, should be bound to communicate it to the viceroy. This was placing the power of the Inquisition in complete subjection to that of the viceroy, and it was so understood. The Inquisition was obliged to submit, but we may suppose that it only waited for an opportunity of regaining its primitive attributes. And we shall see, in fact, that it became the gaoler of the

Viceroy Iturrigaray at the beginning of the insurrection.

At first, and down to about the end of the eighteenth century, the Inquisition had no need to display much activity in Mexico; it hunted down some Portuguese Jews who had entered the country and endeavoured to make fortunes; it prosecuted some monks who cast aside the gown; it sought out and discovered some cases of bigamy; it inspected the printed works which commerce imported, and examined the very few manuscripts which the Mexicans got printed at home. It, however, had much more to do after the United States had conquered their independence. A movement then took place in public opinion, and as the principal object of the Inquisition is to petrify public intelligence, the calling of Inquisitor became somewhat laborious:—there were persons suspected of incredulity to prosecute; there were a greater quantity of books to examine, because the Mexicans procured many more from Europe, especially French ones. The tribunal of the Inquisition had thus at times more than a thousand causes to examine and judge. The Inquisition in consequence demanded an increase of its budget. M. Alaman mentions the despatch of the Viceroy, which transmitted this

demand to the Court of Spain. Amongst the persons who were denounced to the Holy Office, and against whom the latter proceeded, was a priest of great learning, and who is most honourably remembered in Mexico—Abad y Queipo. He, however, found grace before the suspicious tribunal; he was, in fact, so orthodox that he was afterwards promoted to an episcopal see. A renowned professor of mathematics, who rendered great services in public instruction, M. Rojas, was less fortunate than the priest Abad y Queipo. He was condemned and confined in prison, but he had the good luck to escape. He went to New Orleans, and there he troubled the inquisitors by sending into New Spain energetic appeals to his countrymen to imitate the late continental colonies of England in America.

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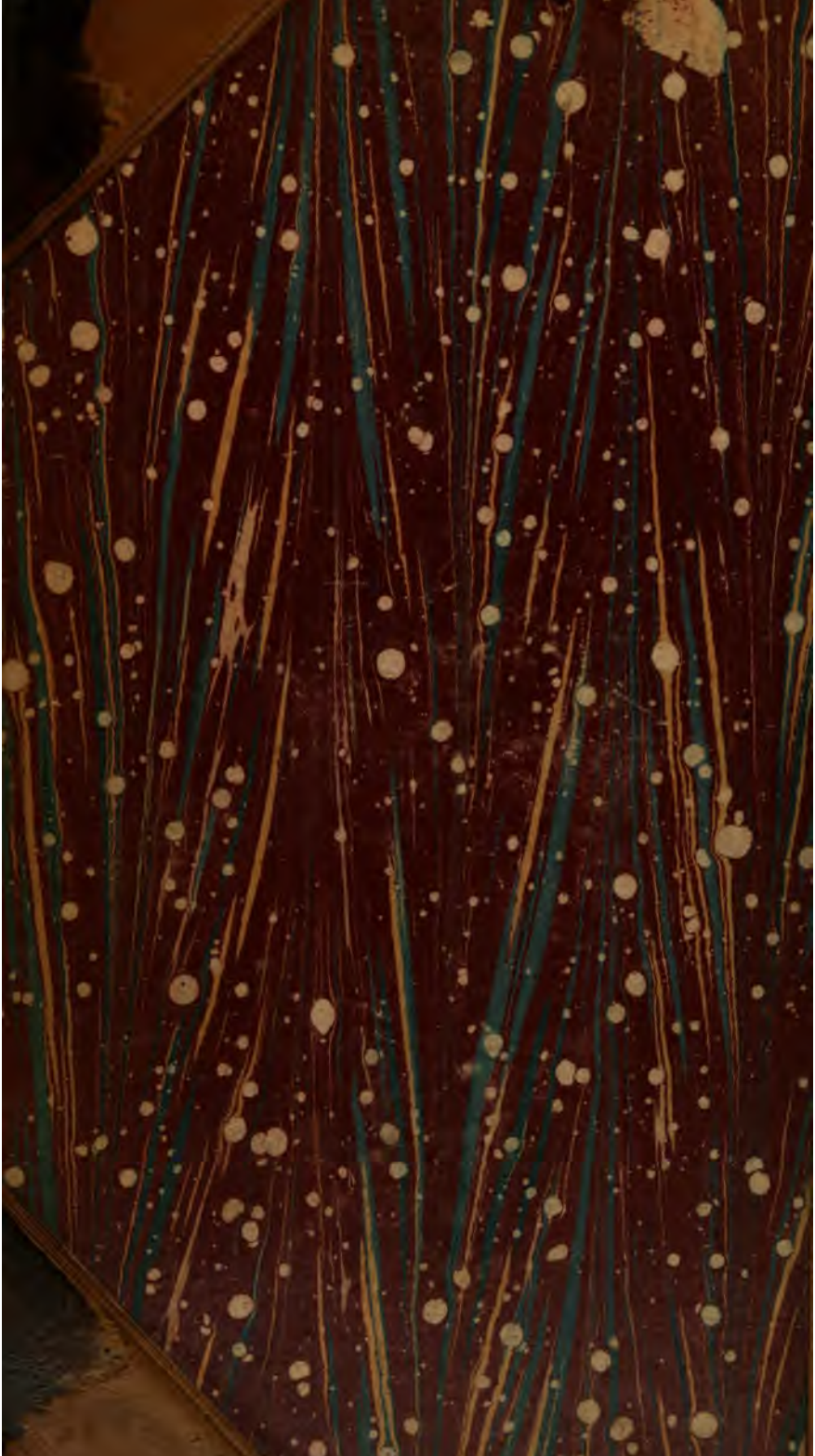
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